National Congress emerged by summer 1963. But a law of that year banning political associations was used against most such initiatives and tight Egyptian control left the two revolutions almost unconnected. Qaʿṭabah and Bayḍāʾ (with Taʿizz as the rear headquarters) were points from which Egypt encouraged war against the British in the South; Sanaa was the base for a quite different Northern fight against the Saudis. The major Yemeni ties between the two were clandestine parties, which spread like bindweed.

In most of the Tihāmah and Lower Yemen there was no fighting, and memories of the war among Lower Yemenis are seldom of military events. People were conscripted, but 25 of every 100 would disappear before ever reaching Sanaa: "When they get to the front there are 50. After two weeks half have absconded, and after a week the rest abscond. The front then asks for another lot, and so it goes." Equipment was poor, pay was in arrears, and men routinely sold their weapons. "The fighting was not as it had been in the first days of the war, a question of life or death. The big effort switched to the Egyptians or to war contractors (*muqāwilīn al-ḥarb*)" who gathered men for money,[17] and Yemen's war in the North became a war of tribesmen. It was not depicted greatly in economic terms, which war in the South was by some from the very start.

ARMED STRUGGLE IN THE SOUTH

In 1959, more than two years before the Sanaa coup, Qaḥṭān al-Shaʿbī had broadcast from Cairo:

> Could the iron screen which the British imperialists put around the Arab South prevent the spread of news about our struggling people? . . . Imperialism wants a very large military base in the area to protect its interests and . . . exploit the resources of our country and thus raise the standard of living of the British people, while our own live a miserable and abject life . . .[18]

Post-independence writers explain the war itself as class struggle against "feudal" rulers who with British support bled their people dry.[19] Economism poses difficult questions, however. Inequality of land tenure was striking in parts of Ḥaḍramawt, for instance; so it was in Laḥj where pump irrigation produced large holdings owned by the ruling family. Yet neither place was a focus of violent action. This developed in more ambiguous settings.

The start of fighting in Radfān, 14 October 1963, was accorded the same importance in the South as 26 September 1962 in the North – revolution day. The Quṭaybīs of Radfān complained of oppression by the Amir of Ḍāliʿ, in whose domain the British always placed them and who, once the Federation was formed, controlled the purse-strings; the accession of Aden in January 1963 made the problem worse. By May 1963 many were going North for weapons, and at the start of October they submitted a petition which shows how British conceits of "sound administration" had miscarried.

> We submit to you this complaint from all Ahl Quteib Aqils [headmen] and Shaikhs against Naib [deputy; local governor] Mahmood Hasson . . . We have got nothing from him except oppression . . . He has changed the system of the Urfi [customary law] Court and Appeal Court . . . He has also made decisions and revoked the judgement of the Urfi Court . . . he has relinquished [sic] the Aqils and notables of Ahl Quteib from their responsibilities and deprived them of their stipends . . .
>
> The said Naib has separated the clans of the Ahl Quteib and placed one above the other.
>
> He deals with the affairs of the Treasury in a way unknown to all . . .[20]

The detailed demands concern state accounts and the farmers' association, whose treasurer had secured for himself a loan to buy a tractor. But the *nāʾib* was the focus of more general problems. The concern with new court procedure, depriving local leaders of their place in webs of arbitration, is indicative of the way that autonomy had been placed at issue – individuals and families, as much as clans, had been "placed one above the other".

In October 1963 a patrol was fired on. The Federal Army intervened, killing Rājiḥ Labūzah, a Quṭaybī shaykh who had been in the North. The British Army, not just local forces, then launched a major campaign in Spring 1964, leading much of the population to flee, and attempts to cut supply routes to the "dissidents" spread resistance. New "fronts" were opened by the NLF in Lower Yāfiʿ (the territory of Muḥammad ʿAydarūs, still active as he had been in the late 1950s but from the start at daggers drawn with Qaḥṭān al-Shaʿbī) and in Dathīnah, where a single camel-train was thought to have supplied 45 mines, 150 grenades, 200 rifles and a war-chest of 40,000 riyāls.[21] Radfān was subdued by the British, who were soon sinking wells there and encouraging agriculture, but guerrilla action recurred in many places.

The fighting was depicted at the time as war against colonialism, and later as class struggle. Such terms obscure the texture of events. In Shuʿayb in 1963, for instance, the Arab political officer, Aḥmad Faḍl Muḥsin of Faḍlī, was murdered by his radio operator, Ṣāliḥ Muqbil

al-Maqdhūb, later prominent in the NLF.[22] Two years afterwards (1965), the new ruler of Shuʿayb, Nāshir ʿAbdullāh, was murdered in Aden. Both events appear part of the anti-imperialist struggle. But Aḥmad Faḍl on his deathbed blamed Yaḥyā Khalāqī, the Shuʿayb state treasurer, and cast Ṣāliḥ Maqdhūb as Khalāqī's catspaw. The relation of Khalāqī to Nāshir ʿAbdullāh, then an officer in the Federal Guard and present in the area on the day of the murder, was complex; the murderer himself meanwhile had a niece named Ṣāliḥah whose flashing eyes at the well, so people say, had met those of Aḥmad Faḍl. The stories extend in conflicting ripples. Nāshir's murder in Aden, claimed at once by the NLF as a blow against feudalism and colonialism, may as probably have been revenge by the "feudal" Faḍlīs, while suspicion that al-Maqdhūb's motivation was personal persists.

Institutions are no easier to write of. One of the organisations which made up the NLF was the Yāfiʿ Reform Front, which emerged in April 1963 near Labʿūs: a meeting was held at the ʿĪd when people from miles around traditionally gather at the tomb of Muḥḍār, and it was agreed that provocative *zāmils* (tribal poems) not be answered but an effort be made to establish truces.[23] A later literature depicts the Front as part of a class struggle which culminates in well-theorised Marxism. Contemporary evidence is sparse. A political programme would only produce disagreement, it was thought, so the Yāfiʿ Front's constitution was pronounced to be the Holy Qur'ān: "For the Qur'ān is the Book of God and the reference point of all, and its judgements are a constitution to decide among people . . ."

Some idea of the period emerges from accounts by Egyptian journalists.[24] Local shaykhs are prominent as leaders, truce-making among tribes is as vital as combat against colonialists, and the everyday language reported is largely of Islam. One aspect of the region's volatility, however, is caught by Muthannā's story. The son of a minor shaykh, he had no schooling until, driving his father's pack-camels to Aden, "he saw another kind of life" and sold his rifle for a ticket to Kuwait where he worked at menial jobs and went to night school for a time, before "he set aside his great hope" again to return and fight. The Aden hinterland (like some parts of Lower Yemen) had many such figures, with a smattering of education, some experience of the wider world, and enormous hopes. For the moment the sheer recalcitrance of the area seemed to British eyes the result of "subversion" cross-cut with "tribalism".

What Egypt did to Britain in the South, the Saudis did to Egypt in the North without powerful ideology. The royalists never announced a

programme, or even used terms, very different from those of their opponents. An early American assessment thus spoke of "Saudi gold and arms" keeping "the tribal pot bubbling".[25] Tribes themselves invoked such claims to autonomy as *al-nār qabla l-ʿār* ("rather fire than shame!", death before dishonour), many played all ends against the middle, and the Egyptians in the North, like the British in the South, identified tribalism with endemic treachery. What in fact was going on, of course, was that local concerns were more compelling than the aims of foreign governments.

ADEN AS POLITICAL FOCUS

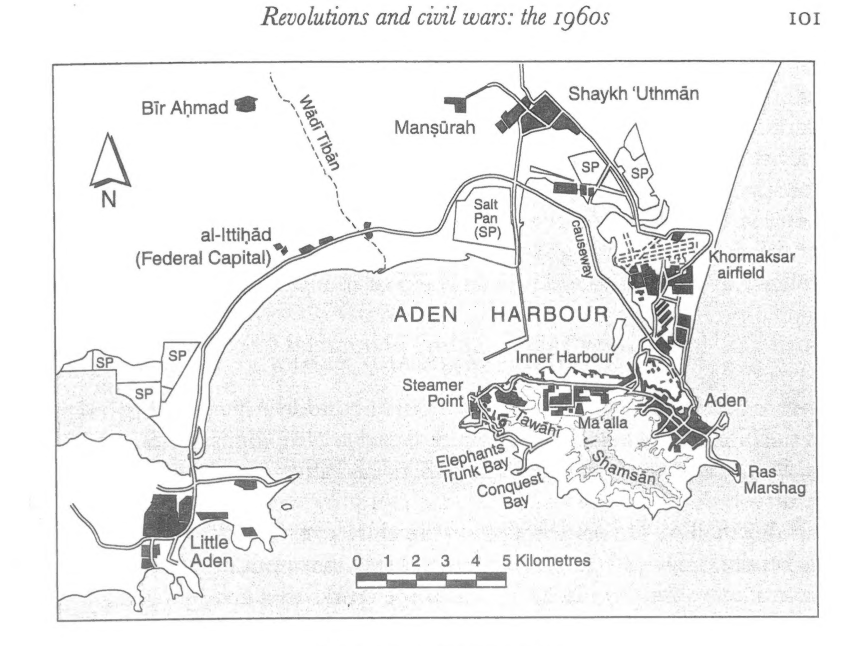
If fighting in the countryside, North and South, could be taken for tribalism, events in Aden could not; and an attempt, in December 1963, to kill the Governor, Trevaskis, with a hand-grenade provoked a state of emergency which in varying forms was renewed thereafter. Those behind the attack were soon mostly freed. Indeed through the fight to follow, when bombings, murders and assassinations became common, few were ever held for long and none executed. Violence remained enmeshed in broader politics.[26] The political crux remained the franchise in Aden State, which excluded the ATUC's base of migrant workers, and a "pathological reluctance" among the British to deal with al-Aṣnaj of the ATUC in formal terms. They dealt instead with Aden State's government and with the Federation of South Arabia of which, from early 1963, Aden State was part. The workers' movement, most of whom were from the North, were excluded and relied on strikes, their frustrations aligning with Egypt's wish to drive the British out entirely.

At the time of Radfān, Cairo Radio menaced Aden too: "Tomorrow the revolution will extend to each of the 14 states which form the South Arabian Federation. Tomorrow the volcano will erupt in the heart of Aden; the free will destroy the base of colonialism; the revolutionaries will burn down the oil refineries."[27] Attempts to consolidate the Federation of port and hinterland threatened Egypt's interests, and Cairo Radio denounced not only the "agent Sultans" but anyone who might attend a conference: "Declare a relentless war that destroys everything. Do not give the agents a chance to travel to London. Dig graves for them and bury them . . ." In January 1964 an attempt was made to murder five Adeni politicians, two of them members of the ATUC's own political wing. A bomb went off at the Federal Legislature, denying the very chance of talks.

In June 1964 Federal rulers met in London: independence was now to be granted by late 1968 and rights to the base negotiated. The British, however, were no longer minded to give short-term responsibility for security to local forces, the authority of the Federal Government was thus limited and militants soon concluded it was not worth dealing with: "its dependence on ourselves [the British] is at times so humiliatingly intrusive that its claims to having a real potential for independence have no ring of truth and it is so obviously restricted by our controls that its behaviour does not even approximate to that of a real Arab Government".[28] Trevaskis, the author of this memorandum, thought no better of the Northern Republic ("a meaningless farce . . . propped up by 40,000 UAR troops") but admitted people did not see it that way. Yemenis hoped the Republic would become more fully Yemeni; meanwhile it was at least an Arab government and few people wished the Imamate back. As a tea-seller said to a journalist in Taʿizz, "Sallāl, very good! Imam fuggoff!" In the South the same was said of Britain.

Elections for Aden State were held on a narrow voter-base (10,000 Aden citizens who could pass a test in Arabic; the total population was now 220,000), which dissatisfied both militants and Federal rulers. The large turnout of this tiny electorate, despite al-Aṣnaj's call for a boycott, perhaps signifies how far Aden's politics stood from practicality. The man thought to have thrown the grenade at Trevaskis ("Grenadier Khalīfah" as the British called him) was elected, along with Hāshim ʿUmar, already with the NLF, and representatives of such old Aden families as Makāwī and Luqmān. No coherent policy emerged.

In Britain, at the same time as the Aden elections (October 1964), the Conservative government was replaced by Labour, who strongly favoured talks with the ATUC, not realising perhaps the difficulties of what in Aden passed as labour politics, and had as strong a distrust or incomprehension of the Federal rulers (all apparently "feudal" figures) as their predecessors had of Aṣnaj.[29] Trevaskis was replaced as governor. The Sharīf of Bayḥān, a key figure in the Federal Government, soon stopped attending meetings. Discussion of the constitution foundered, and at the end of 1964 the NLF began eliminating the Aden Special Branch. A grenade was then thrown into a teenagers' party; a second was thrown into a cinema used by British service families. At an Arab League meeting in March 1965 the group around al-Aṣnaj asked that funds be provided for schools and the NLF demanded they be spent on weapons.[30] Al-Aṣnaj was losing his hold on the ATUC itself, and by the time that emergency powers were invoked by Britain (June 1965) he had



Map 4.2. Aden circa 1965

left for Cairo, where he was joined soon by ʿAbd al-Qawī Makāwī, Chief Minister of Aden's government.

As Yemeni nationalism became realistic politics with the coup of 1962 so the British for other reasons had raised the stakes, naming Aden's base as the major link between Britain and Singapore: it was elevated, says Pieragostini, "from colonial backwater to strategic necessity". An Iraqi threat to Kuwait (1961) provided one justification, troubles in Zanzibar (1964) another; through late 1965 the build-up and expenditure were enormous, adding ever more complexity and bitterness to what already was a large and sprawling city (Map 4.2). More and more soldiers were deployed to secure Aden, which itself was meant to secure the Indian Ocean and the oil-rich Gulf. The process went on until Aden, as a wit remarked, "consumed more security than it could ever produce".

Yemeni nationalists and Egyptians alike, says a British political officer thirty years later, "were living in an heroic age". All things seemed possible. The British felt themselves in an age of decline, by contrast, and their imperial pretensions rang deeply hollow. They were willing, as in the 1950s, to bomb and rocket their own side ("dissidents" in Federation territory), but bombing the Egyptians supplying the NLF was politically

unacceptable; no Draconian measure of licensing or expelling Aden's migrant workers was considered either, and if authority be measured by the confidence with which power is used then the British had lost before they started. Their newer global pretensions proved as problematic, for the Treasury could not sustain the cost. With no warning to anyone, London declared in February 1966 that Aden was not vital after all, the British would leave by 1968, the base itself would be abandoned, and no defence agreement would protect the post-independence government.

ʿABD AL-NĀṢIR AND YEMEN

Before the British announced they would abandon Aden, the Egyptians in the North may have felt despair. Successive campaigns north and east of Sanaa had won them nothing, their casualties had been large, the drain on Egypt's treasury was vast, and by mid-1965, though the numbers fell off afterwards, there were close to 60,000 Egyptian troops in Yemen.[31] Despite their claim to defend the republic, they scarcely controlled more beyond Sanaa than the Turks had sixty years before. Beneath the plots and conspiracies, meanwhile, a certain sense of the Yemeni state took form.

The first book published under the Republic was probably *Ibn al-Amīr and His Age* (1964) by Qāsim Ghālib Aḥmad, who had once been a Shāfiʿī preacher in Aden and was several times Minister of Education. His subject, Ibn al-Amīr, was a Zaydī reformer of the eighteenth century. In Qāsim Ghālib's view he had been a radical whose insistence on using Sunni as well as Shiʿite sources meant "non-sectarian" rapprochement between Shāfiʿīs and Zaydīs and whose rhetoric was of impartial justice. Ibn al-Amīr had also been a *sayyid*, however. The anti-*sayyid* rhetoric which spread among *qāḍī* families in the 1950s (Chapter 3) was reinforced by Bayḍānī's broadcasts and grew as the war continued: baffled by Yemen's intractability, some Egyptians as well as Yemenis equated *sayyids* as a class with feudalists. Qāsim Ghālib's second book (1968) thus shifted to Shawkānī, a "non-sectarian" *qāḍī* reformer. The irony went unremarked that Shawkānī in his day had been "judge of judges", the keystone in an autocratic type of government the Republic had overthrown.[32]

The second edition of Sharaf al-Dīn's *Yemen Throughout History*, continuing the nationalist approach first encouraged by Imam Yaḥyā, appeared at about the same time as Qāsim Ghālib's first book. In the same year (1964) ʿAbd al-Malik al-Ṭayyib, writing as ʿAbd al-Ilāh,

published in Beirut his angry *Collapse of the Revolution in Yemen*. A Zaydī dismissed from government on the pretext of prejudice against Shāfiʿīs, he was soon to link himself with the Muslim Brothers and later also to be Minister of Education. Muḥammad al-Akwaʿ in 1966 published his edition of the second volume of Hamdānī's tenth-century *Diadem Book*. Imam Yaḥyā had encouraged historiography (Chapter 2), and the ancient past had become a reference point for young activists such as Muḥsin al-ʿAynī (Chapter 3) as much as for Imamic writers: Hamdānī, for all concerned, was a keystone of national heritage. More contemporary work included Muḥammad Nuʿmān's *The Interested Parties in Yemen* (1965).

Nuʿmān's work addresses the contrast between tribes and peasants (*qabāʾil* and *raʿiyyah*), which was largely, in his view, that between Zaydīs and Shāfiʿīs: the prominence of Zaydī tribesmen in national politics since the start of the war alarmed him. The same concern as with Qāsim Ghālib then recurs about *sayyids* and non-*sayyids*, although the *sayyid* aristocracy of the Imam's day was abetted, says Nuʿmān, by *qāḍī* families. But Yemen has always been "parties" in the sense of groups with different interests. That is the country's nature and has been so for millennia. The tragedy now, he argues, is that none can understand the other's viewpoint. Although, diplomatically, he downplays the question of rivalry on Yemeni terrain among Arab powers, his views emerged with the failure of successive attempts at peace between Egypt and the Saudis.

Iryānī, Zubayrī and Nuʿmān had all resigned in late 1964 in protest at "corrupt, incompetent and bankrupt government". Sallāl appointed a soldier, Ḥasan al-ʿAmrī, as prime minister. Despairing of politics in Sanaa, Zubayrī declared a "Party of God" and moved among the northern tribes in search of a general truce but was murdered on 1 April 1965 at Baraṭ in the far northeast, and under threat of massive tribal secession Sallāl appointed as prime minister Aḥmad Nuʿmān, who had been Zubayrī's colleague. The conference was convened that Zubayrī planned. Invitations were issued by ʿAbdullāh al-Aḥmar, paramount shaykh of Ḥāshid, who at that time was minister of the interior: from relative obscurity under the last Imams, tribal shaykhs had emerged since the start of the war as major governmental figures. The Khamir conference convened in early May 1965, and on 10 May Nuʿmān sent a telegram to King Fayṣal of Saudi Arabia inviting talks.[33]

Many authors see a split here, as at ʿAmrān, between "extreme" and "moderate" republicans, left and right, or indeed between social

classes.[34] The sole distinction which carries through unambiguously in the record is that between soldiers attached to the Egyptian cause and others. On 27 June Sallāl announced a "supreme council of the armed forces", Nuʿmān resigned (some forty of his supporters were soon in prison), and in late July a large delegation of shaykhs left for the South by way of royalist territory. Some went on to Beirut, some to Saudi Arabia where talks were held at al-Ṭā'if while in Yemen Egyptian military activity again increased until suddenly Nāṣir and King Fayṣal themselves met, to the great disquiet of Sallāl, the MAN and NLF. Again Nuʿmān, Iryānī and Muḥammad ʿAlī ʿUthmān were brought into government and preparations made for further talks.

A very different conference had been held at Taʿizz, in June 1965, where the NLF produced a "National Charter". This begins with a Qur'ānic quotation then invokes the pre-Islamic past as al-ʿAynī had done some years before: the civilisation (*haḍārah*) of Yemen's ancient kingdoms "shows the collective efforts of our people and their vast, latent practical capacity". The analysis of Yemen's "backwardness" in modern times, so at odds with a noble past, unfolds in broadly Leninist terms from Europe's industrial revolution and the spread of imperialism. to depict an alliance of colonialism and feudalism within the two parts of Yemen and between them whereby sultans in the South (by extension also shaykhs in the North) had seized the people's land. Revolution "must aim to replace exploitative social facts with progressive social facts . . . on the basis of revolutionary socialism".[35] To what extent other "interested parties" grasped the import at the time is unclear.

Lower Yemen was divided. Complaints were heard about the power of "merchants", Zaydīs complained of being squeezed from posts by Shāfiʿīs, and among the Shāfiʿīs themselves a group including Qāsim Ghālib complained of the Nuʿmāns: "We are not going to swear allegiance to an Imam named Aḥmad Nuʿmān", they said, after a difference over who controlled al-Rāhidah, a customs post involved with smuggling (not least of whisky and beer) from Aden. The NLF formed part of such disputes also, but the context was far from simple. Broad discontents, which raised the spectre of Shāfiʿī separatism, centred not only on Qāsim Ghālib but on such figures as ʿAbd al-Ghanī Muṭahhar and Muḥammad ʿAlī ʿUthmān who were centrally part of government. Nuʿmān, with certain shaykhs, was seeking an end to fighting in the North: demonstrations in Taʿizz against a meeting of sultans from the Aden hinterland in Spring 1965, may well have expressed concerns with the prospect of the Northern war being ended at Lower Yemeni expense

as much as concerns about the Southern war, and if the NLF had reason to encourage such demonstrations, so too did Egypt. Shāfiʿī shaykhs who aligned themselves with al-Aḥmar (Zaydī) and Nuʿmān (Shāfiʿī) now found themselves attacked by troops from (Zaydī) Sanaa to the delight of the (Shāfiʿī) left. But if Nuʿmān was a focus of complex tensions, his picture was nonetheless seen on trucks and in shops throughout Lower Yemen.[36]

ʿAbd al-Nāṣir and King Fayṣal, for reasons of their own, agreed a cease-fire in August 1965, and Yemeni royalist and republican delegations met at Ḥaraḍ near the Saudi border in November, where Egypt pressured the republicans to accept the Saudi formulation of an "Islamic State". The republicans refused;[37] the talks failed. In early 1966, when Britain announced its intention to withdraw from Aden, Egypt consolidated its forces in the triangle of the main Northern cities, intent on waiting the British out, and the war quietened, but attempts to pursue independent Yemeni positions, whether by Nuʿmān and Iryānī or increasingly by Ḥasan al-ʿAmrī, were all frustrated by Egyptian policy. In the countryside, meanwhile, great names were made in the fighting, and such republican shaykhs as Mujāhid Abū Shawārib of Khārif in Ḥāshid became as widely known as their royalist opponents.

In August 1966 Sallāl returned to Yemen, having been in Cairo for the best part of a year. Al-ʿAmrī tried to prevent him landing. To protest against Sallāl's return the Presidential Council, along with eight ministers and many others, went to Cairo, where in effect the whole Yemeni government was detained by Egypt – "one is faced," said Muḥammad al-ʿAṭṭār, "with a phenomenon unprecedented in the history of international relations!" – and in Yemen a new administration was formed of such determinedly pro-Egyptian soldiers as ʿAbdullāh Juzaylān and Muḥammad al-Ahnūmī. Some were cynical about Ahnūmī himself, "who used to live in some hut in the Tihāmah where he didn't even own a mat and now lives in a great palace . . ."; his wedding had been so grand, they said, that 50,000 rounds had been fired off in celebration. Juzaylān, who grew up in Taʿizz though the family are originally from Baraṭ (his grandfather had been a cavalry trooper with the Turks), was very much Egypt's man: his wife was Egyptian and he himself saw Cairo as the model of progress and modernity. In October a State Security Court was established and several persons at odds with Egypt were shot by firing squad,[38] while the Egyptians again began bombing dissident tribal areas, sometimes using, as they had before, poisonous gas.

Eric Rouleau's account gives a vivid picture of the region east of Sanaa. Even royalist princes condemned Imam Aḥmad ("the 1962 revolution was ours and the Egyptians stole it from us!"), and many "royalists" seemed to feel a republic of some sort should be formed if Egypt left. People meanwhile slipped in and out of Sanaa. Prince ʿAbdullāh Ḥasan had fruit, meat, tinned chicken, Egyptian cigarettes and fuel for his generator from republican commerce, while sections of Khawlān took money and guns from both sides, but this was the third successive year of drought.

> The terraces which used to produce wheat and millet lie fallow . . . All along our route we saw hundreds of goats and sheep dead of hunger and thirst. With defeated expressions, men wander the plains and mountains begging for a piece of bread or sometimes for water to drink . . . rare were the mothers who had not lost at least one of their children in the past year.[39]

Shaykh Nājī al-Ghādir meanwhile, feasted his guests on meat and rice. From a vast pile of gold sovereigns he allotted two for a boy to receive medical attention in Najrān, where apparently his ills were attributed to malnutrition.

In January 1967, a little before Rouleau's visit, Sallāl formed a Popular Revolutionary Union. The meeting was attended by Makāwī (ex-head of Aden's government) and representatives of the Baʿth and of the MAN as well as more immediate allies. A counter-meeting was convened in Nihm during March by Sinān Abū Laḥūm, who had fought the Imam through 1959–62 and is counted in the literature as a major republican but at Khamir and Ḥaraḍ alike sat in fact with the royalist contingent. Al-Aḥmar of Ḥāshid demanded that the government detained in Cairo be returned and prisoners held since August 1966 be released.[40] The pro-Egyptian state security system maintained its grip, however, and thirty years later one of those who had studied abroad in Aḥmad's time remembers: "Many people co-operated with the Soviets. Some with the Americans. Some even with the British. But if they did so it was for the good of Yemen. We don't look down on them as we do on those who co-operated with the Egyptians."[41]

In the South the moral priorities were otherwise: to have talked with the British would rank as treachery, with the Egyptians as patriotism. But the South was no more amenable to foreign control than was the North, and part of Northern savagery in 1966–7 was for Southern reasons. At the same time as the "Khamir group" were hunted down by Egypt, so were the MAN and trades-unionists around Taʿizz: the "Young Men's Association" was suppressed and demonstrations in Taʿizz (September 1966) were fired on by Egyptian troops.[42] On the one hand Egypt wished to play such figures as ʿAbd al-Ghanī Muṭahhar off against the Khamir axis; on the other it was increasingly wary of the MAN, of which ʿAbd al-Ghanī was a member, because the NLF (the National Liberation Front), which the MAN dominated, had split with Egyptian policy on Aden. The NLF itself soon split between "bourgeois" and "revolutionary" factions.

Al-Aṣnaj, the Aden trades union leader now in Cairo, had formed an alliance with such anti-colonial members of ruling families as Muḥammad ʿAydarūs of Yāfiʿ and with al-Jifrī's South Arabian League, themselves somewhat compromised in Yemeni affairs by Saudi connections which date to 1959. Setting aside some of the latter group, Egypt promoted an alliance with the NLF to form FLOSY (Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen),[43] announced in January 1966. A second conference of the NLF met in June at Jiblah. The meeting was protected, it seems, by Muṭīʿ al-Dammāj, a shaykh from near Ibb who had fled to Aden in the 1940s to escape Imam Aḥmad (Chapter 2), seized Ibb for the republic in 1962, and gone on to espouse more radical ideals.[44] The conference rejected the Egyptian merger. They feared a compromise with the Saudis, they despised many of those in the South they were asked to work with, and their views had out-stripped Nāṣirism.

Three works, all translated to Arabic, recur in people's memories: Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, Maxim Gorky's *Mother* and Georges Politzer's *Principles of Philosophy*.[45] The last, which derived from lectures given to French workers in the 1930s, is classical Marxism of the Stalin period, informed by not only historical materialism but dialectical materialism, a whole philosophy of the universe which in Arabic might sometimes have seemed as obscure yet powerful as a tract of the Jewish kabbala. Such figures as Muthannā, whom we mentioned earlier returning from Kuwait with a little schooling, were open to such appeals quite as much as were the better read. Nor were practical connections lacking. Yāfiʿ tribesmen divided by a purely local quarrel had early in the war gone north to find which party to the feud were politically correct and which were the "henchmen of colonialism". Such questions would soon be posed in terms of feudalism, reaction and world imperialism.

Shaykhs and sultans in the South were becoming marginalised. Muḥammad ʿAydarūs, who had fought the British since 1957, would not join "Qaḥṭān al-Shaʿbī's Front" (disputes over precedence and money went back to 1963); al-Shaʿbī and al-Aṣnaj detested each other, and

al-Aṣnaj's colleagues had negotiated with the "feudal" sultans; the MAN's dislike of al-Jifrī's League, with which the sultans were also in touch, was matched only by its loathing of the Baʿth, with whom al-Aṣnaj sympathised.[46] In November 1966, at a meeting in Ḥumar near the North–South border, the NLF made explicit the split with FLOSY.[47] Cairo Radio attributed to FLOSY all the NLF did, but in fact the Egyptian Intelligence Service had lost control.

Divisions among parties and states were not the whole reality. Aden was full of Northerners, of whom most were not closely involved with politics, and Yemenis, more surprisingly, worked in Saudi Arabia throughout the war: their numbers through the mid-1960s may have been in excess of 100,000. Although Sanaa's government portrayed itself often as Saudi Arabia's sworn enemy, depending on the shifts of Egyptian policy, not until 1967 did the Saudis block workers' remittances which, along with Egyptian subsidies, kept the North solvent. Most of the North's imports meanwhile still came through Aden, and for a period in 1966 the Federal Government closed the North–South border, with dire results for Northerners, but soon reopened it. Disputes between governments overlay, and only sometimes interrupted, an unwritten history of movement and migrant labour.

The border zone between North and South was from this viewpoint merely no-man's land. A local view might differ. Al-Ḥumayqān, for instance, had been represented at major conferences north of Sanaa (ʿAmrān and Khamir, notably), but also formed part of Yāfiʿ truce-making and thus of Southern politics, while Yāfiʿ themselves had people still fighting in the North. The "factional grouping", as some saw it, of ʿAbd al-Ghanī Muṭahhar, al-Ahnūmī and others was connected with Aden merchants such as al-Shumayrī and Shahāb, yet equally with rivalries and alliances north of Sanaa; Adenis involved with trades unions knew well such Northern figures as Nuʿmān and al-ʿAynī, and through al-ʿAynī the Abu Laḥūms of Nihm. Regardless of sect or party, everyone knew everyone else – or someone else who knew them. With the suppression of Taʿizz politics, all this was lost to view.[48] The NLF and MAN drew on different connections, owing more to the Yemeni disapora.

THE END OF THE BRITISH IN THE SOUTH

If ʿAbd al-Nāṣir's position was fast unravelling, so was that of the British, whose announcement of withdrawal seemed to gain them nothing, for

the level of violence only rose the more. 9 June 1966 was a busy but not untypical day:

18.45 grenade incident in Crater
19.15 grenade incident in Crater (one local killed, several injured)
21.00 grenade incident in al-Manṣūrah
22.30 two grenades found near the Chartered Bank.

16 June was worse, with a land-mine going off at 18.30, a grenade at 19.15, and so on through the night.[49] In parts of the Aden hinterland the British had long since been drawn into dubious forms of "counter-insurgency" (planting mines surreptitiously, for instance, where others might be blamed for the results); in Aden itself they joined in what amounted to gang warfare, and more conventional operations within the town proved self-defeating. An enquiry into allegations of torture in late 1966 mentions that the way army raids and searches were carried out was "in no small measure responsible for the general ill-feeling towards the authorities . . ."[50]

The NLF, though still ill-defined internally, linked country and city now. In both domains the usual instrument of colonial control, a locally recruited police and army, proved a liability. The Federal Regular Army (FRA) to a large extent was de-tribalised and promotion depended on examinations; the Federal Guard (FG) on the other hand was more obviously laced with ties of kinship. Resentment in the FRA was widespread, and as Holden remarks more generally, the military was a "nursery of nationalism", for some 400 local officers had experience of command by now, a taste of solidarity beyond tribe or village, and every reason to replace the British. As early as January 1964 a joke military communiqué had gone around in British circles: "*Enemy* – consists of FRA and FG personnel on leave, armed with rifles on loan from their parent units . . . Occasionally they are reinforced by small numbers of tribesmen and they are normally commanded by an FRA or FG officer on leave of field rank . . ."[51] The joke wore thin as it became apparent that the police in Aden were as little committed to British aims as the Federal Army, and in the east, the small Quʿayṭī and Kathīrī State Forces and the Ḥaḍramī Bedouin Legion (HBL), although independent of Aden, showed the same processes as in the Federal Army. All are remembered from the 1950s as lecturing rural neighbours and relatives on correct Islamic practice; in the 1960s all were infiltrated by the NLF.

Certain Northerners had suggested early on that there was no need to fight in the South at all for the British were leaving anyway, and the



Plate 4.2. The Aden Emergency.

announcement of a date only strengthened that perception. Al-Aṣnaj, in Aden, had also rejected turning the South into "a second Congo" but ʿAbd al-Nāṣir, in his own polemic style and for reasons of Egyptian policy, had insisted on revolution: "Some may ask, why fight for independence when the British will grant it freely in 1968? Comrades, true independence is not given away but taken; . . . the people must wage armed revolution against the enemy, in which they must pay the highest price in life and blood."[52] Those who split from ʿAbd al-Nāṣir's camp took such rhetoric more seriously than did he and the NLF became committed to revolutionary violence in such a way that all talk of a relation between means and ends appeared treachery or cowardice.

In February 1966 ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Ismāʿīl of the NLF murdered ʿAlī Ḥusayn al-Qāḍī, President of the ATUC (Aden Trades Union Congress).[53] ʿAlī Ḥusayn was himself a Baʿthist and very much a nationalist, but the ATUC was a key to controlling Aden, and although British Intelligence was blamed for the murder and an emotional general strike was called, the revolutionary factions were now fighting among themselves. Shaykh ʿAlī Bā Hāmish read a sermon on the radio: "As our Arab



Figure 4.1. Aden casualties, 1960s

South approaches independence, we look for support from our brothers in Yemen [i.e. the North] . . . We appeal to our brothers in the name of God to cease interfering in our affairs . . . and allow us to solve our own problems."[54] In fact the core of the NLF was neither Northern nor Adeni, but precisely the "provincial lower middle class" which linked Aden to the towns of the rural South and to parts of the North such as Ḥugariyyah. Aden was their battleground. The murder of three of Makāwī's sons by the NLF in February 1967 led to a vast funeral at which supporters of al-Jifrī's South Arabian League were kicked to death, and in the months to follow, FLOSY and the NLF murdered each other in growing numbers as well as fighting the colonial power whose withdrawal had been announced already (Fig. 4.1).

The pace of events was not everywhere the same. A Kuwaiti magazine at the turn of 1965–6 published four illustrated pieces on Ḥadramawt.[55] Sickness and poverty are mentioned more than once, along with the troubles of the badu, lack of industry, double-taxation between Kathīrī and Quʿayṭī states, and insufficient funds for education. British hypocrisy and inefficiency are blamed. The dominant images, however, are of earnest little girls at school and of pumped wells being sunk in the major wadis. Revolution forms no part of the picture. British reports, also, suggest a world far removed from Aden. The South Arabian League remained a force in Wādī Duʿān and Wādī ʿAmd, while the coastal towns became dominated by the Arab Socialist Party, soon to be a stronghold of the NLF; but the Quʿayṭī government, under

Aḥmad al-ʿAṭṭās, had licensed both parties in late 1965, and politics still turned in large part on rivalries between the Āl al-ʿAṭṭās and their fellow *sayyids*.

In Ḥaḍramawt the first "terrorist incident" in British files was an attack in Mukallā in June 1966. The British deputy commander of the Bedouin Legion had been murdered in June the year before, and the commander himself was murdered in July 1966; neither was a "political" killing though both were claimed as such,[56] and conflict in most of Ḥaḍramawt remained low key. Mukallā, the scene of rioting in 1950, 1958 and again in 1964, became a dangerous place: there and in Sayyūn other factions, stimulated by new returnees from places such as Zanzibar, combined against the South Arabian League and drove them out in September 1966, but in the countryside revolution was hard to find. As late as July 1967 the assistant adviser visited Ghayl Bin Yumayn, in Ḥamūmī territory, for nothing more than a picnic. The women of the area, whose modesty is not that of tribes further west, danced all night while poetry was recited and Ḥamūmī songs were sung.

By the 1960s, Ḥaḍramī dependence on Indonesia and East Africa had given way to remittances from workers and business families in Saudi Arabia, some of the latter having been established there for twenty years. The South Arabian League, in Jiddah, suggested to such families as the Bin Lādins that the Ḥaḍramī Sultans be overthrown; but they also wanted FLOSY removed, preferably by the British, and the Ḥaḍramī business families themselves seemed to think in terms of Quʿayṭī ministerial intrigue. The Eastern states' chief aim, as of mid-1966,

> was to avoid becoming too closely involved in the struggle between feudalism and Arab socialism, and while both extremes are represented by minority groups which would like to come out firmly on one side or the other, the great majority hold no strong views . . . and are not much concerned which side comes out on top so long as they themselves do not suffer in the process.

The same writer goes on to say, however, that dreadful things were likely after independence. People were stockpiling arms and ammunition. It was the British who raised the issue of Ḥaḍramawt somehow combining with a non-Yemeni neighbour, perhaps Oman or more plausibly Saudi Arabia. The suggestion "was met with apathy".[57]

The arbiter among rival nationalists in both Eastern and Western Protectorates (as they had been not long before) proved often to be soldiers, and by the time the British left, at the end of 1967, there were 10,000 men in uniform, few of whom had interests parallel with British

policy. In June 1967 four battalions of the Federal Guard were merged with the Federal Army; the rest of the Federal Guard were amalgamated with the Civil and Armed Police. The atmosphere could not have been less conducive to last-minute colonial manoeuvres, for in early June 1967, and with embarrassing ease, the Egyptian home army was destroyed by Israel. "The snake's head has been struck by a viper," said royalists in the North. FLOSY, the Egyptian-backed grouping in the South, was left exposed.

On 20 June 1967 a mass of plots and discontents exploded within the Federal Army when soldiers rioted north of Aden Town.[58] The police nearby killed eight British soldiers. The police in the Federal capital of al-Ittiḥād then panicked too and so did those in Crater, where looting broke out as the British for a time stood back. They still hoped the Federal Government might succeed them, but by now lacked the will to support that government, and as British troops withdrew from the countryside (a process well under way by the start of summer), the Federal Rulers and their little states fell one by one.

In August 1967 fighting broke out in Laḥj among FLOSY, the NLF and remnants of the South Arabian League. The Federal Army failed to restore order. They then declined to support the ruler of Shuʿayb, and al-Ḍāliʿ then fell to ʿAlī ʿAntar, who had fought in the area for years. In the early 1990s a dramatic mural in the Ḍāliʿ *sūq* still depicted nationalists in close-range combat with the British and storming the Amir's residence under fire; in practice, the two remaining British officers were simply told to leave as vast crowds gathered, and the Amir's brothers had their possessions looted as they later withdrew to Aden. FLOSY launched raids from the North, meanwhile, none of which secured lasting gains, while Dathīnah fell to the NLF, then so did ʿAwdhalī.

To unpick what the NLF was in each of these areas is difficult: a clandestine organisation of its nature keeps few records, a party flag might be hoist by anyone. But the flags appeared in strange places. Radfān, where the fighting had started four years earlier, Ḥawshabī, a thorn in British flesh since 1920, and Jabal Jaḥḥāf, enemies of the "feudal" Amir of Ḍāliʿ, all stood for the moment with FLOSY, as did the remaining rulers in what had once been the Western Protectorate – in Bayḥān, Upper ʿAwlaqī and Wāḥidī. At the end, the Sharīf of Bayḥān left for Saudi Arabia, pursuing some policy of his own; his state disappeared in his absence, most probably from family rivalry. The Sultans of Ḥaḍramawt returned from talks in Geneva in September 1967, only to find the Bedouin Legion and NLF had seized their capitals.[59]

FLOSY were more numerous perhaps within Aden, save among the oil workers and the dockers who were largely NLF. In Little Aden, around the refinery, the Federal Army had backed the NLF. In Shaykh ʿUthmān and al-Manṣūrah they gradually gained the upper hand, and in Aden Town itself the army arbitrated between the NLF and FLOSY until serious fighting erupted, then threw their weight behind the NLF who followed through their victory with a purge of FLOSY elements from the police and army and a settling of scores with civilians opposed to them. With the British behind wire and sandbags, no longer part of these events, hundreds of people were killed as if the revolution were merely starting. The last British troops were lifted off to an assault ship on 29 November 1967.

THE END OF THE EGYPTIANS IN THE NORTH

Defeat by Israel in June 1967 meant the end of Egypt's presence in Arabia. At Khartoum in August/September, Saudi Arabia and Egypt agreed a tripartite commission (Sudan, Iraq, Morocco) to arrange a compromise in Yemen. Sallāl rejected this, as did many others, and large demonstrations took place in Sanaa, where thirty Egyptians were killed by crowds. By mid-October, however, six weeks or so before the British left Aden, the last Egyptian troops had withdrawn from Sanaa to the coast: soon they were gone entirely. The Yemeni government held in Cairo was released, and in early November Sallāl left for Moscow, then retired to Iraq in the wake of a bloodless coup, being replaced as President by a council chaired by Iryānī, and at the start of December 1967 the royalists encircled Sanaa.

The "seventy days" became a national epic. As in 1962, Southerners came north to defend the revolution, and again, as at the start of the war, far larger numbers of volunteers flooded in from Shāfiʿī areas of the North. The National Guard of the early days was recreated as the Popular Resistance Forces. The NLF sent a contingent. Exiled FLOSY fighters from the South were in Sanaa too, however; and al-ʿAmrī stood his ground as well, while most leading Northern governmental and military figures fled. "It would be very difficult", admits ʿUmar al-Jāwī, "to say the republicans resisting the Saudi-Royalist threat had a coherent position . . ."[60] But many in the Popular Resistance, as a royalist commander said later, "were poor men, just returned from abroad . . . They had lost their roots, they didn't know their kin, they no longer had any family or clan with whom to take refuge if things went badly. They had nothing to lose . . . so they fought like lions." ʿAlī Muthannā Jibrān of Damt, for instance, who became artillery commander, grew up in Ethiopia. But the reference to family and clan runs deeper: many in the Popular Resistance felt, rightly, that "the tribes" could come to some accommodation with whomever won, whereas they, if they lost, would lose everything.

A strand of distrust had run through Lower Yemeni politics for years that negotiation with the Saudis might mean betrayal, and in Sanaa a "fifth column" was soon found to be trading with the royalists. Talks with royalists went on at higher level, not least in Beirut, while Algeria provided funds and Russia sent weapons: a dash to Moscow in search of guns and another to Beirut for talks were both made in December by the Foreign Minister, Ḥasan Makkī, who argued consistently, "better years of talks than a day of fighting". Talks and fighting, however, went on together. The Republican army was expanded hugely, from hundreds to thousands in two months, but the roads to Ḥudaydah and Taʿizz were reopened only in February 1968. Though "royalists" remained active in some northern areas until 1970, the war itself was won with the relief of Sanaa.

Many Shāfiʿīs attribute this final triumph to Aḥmad al-ʿAwāḍī, a shaykh from al-Bayḍāʾ who in many ways was larger than life: a fighter and a fierce man with a bottle, he was also a poet whose songs performed by Aḥmad Sanaydar of Sanaa remain famous.[61] Mujāhid Abū Shawārib of Ḥāshid had added to his own name as a fighter around Ḥajjah at the time of the Sanaa siege. Al-ʿAmrī was the Republic's "Napoleon". ʿAbd al-Raqīb bin ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, the young Shāfiʿī commander of the shock troops (*ṣāʿiqah*) made army chief of staff in the siege itself, was the hero of the hour, and the battles, which involved usually small numbers, were recounted "the way our history books described those of Tamburlane or Roland at Roncevalles".[62]

The MAN's distrust of shaykhs and tribes was intense, however; certain shaykhs and others feared the NLF; and rapid expansion of the army led to bitter rivalries, as for instance between ʿAbd al-Raqīb and ʿAlī Sayf al-Khawlānī over who should head newly raised units.[63] In March the MAN and al-ʿAmrī clashed over an arms shipment at Ḥudaydah, and in the forefront of those opposing the MAN was Sinān Abū Laḥūm of Nihm. Near Sanaa, ʿAbdullāh al-Aḥmar and Mujāhid Abū Shawārib of Ḥāshid allied with al-ʿAmrī. On 23 March 1968 a meeting of Bakīl shaykhs (many of them, presumably, had been royalist some months before) was held at Raydah. Their demands were very similar to those of the Popular Resistance.[64]



Plate 4.3. al-Iryānī and Nuʿmān.

In August the tensions erupted into serious fighting and ʿAbd al-Raqīb's supporters were crushed by force.[65] This was taken as a move against the left, which it surely was. It was also over who should control the army; others saw the conflict as primarily between Upper and Lower Yemen, marked by origins and accents, and Zaydī and Shāfiʿī officers were thus exiled to Algeria in equal numbers. When ʿAbd al-Raqīb returned in January 1969, by way of Aden and the NLF, however, he was murdered in Sanaa, quite possibly by adherents of FLOSY allied with al-ʿAmrī's people.

Those who knew him, remember ʿAbd al-Raqīb as a hero but scarcely a politician. In the course of the siege a committee had formed to lead the Popular Resistance: three Baʿthists, three MAN and three independent Marxists. When the Baʿthists conspired with al-ʿAmrī to exclude three others (the Popular Resistance Forces for a time in fact went on strike) all of them went to ʿAbd al-Raqīb, who told them to take no notice of political parties – quite unaware, apparently, that everyone present was a party member. The arbitrariness of events is caught by the story that before the confrontation in March 1968, al-ʿAmrī (symbol of a Zaydī right in much of the literature) intended marrying his sister to ʿAbd al-Raqīb (symbol of the Shāfiʿī left).

Deffarge and Troeller mention an effect that distorts most accounts of Yemen's politics. "As soon as you get away from Yemen, you tend to fall back into classificatory schemes: royalists and northern tribes (roughly the Zaydīs) on one side against mercantile republican trades-unionists (the Shāfiʿīs) on the other." They themselves showed that many Zaydī tribes were republican; one could add that certain royalist tribes were Shāfiʿī (Murād, ʿAbīdah, al-Qayfah, for example). To apply broader categories of left and right is no easier. When Sallāl was deposed in November 1967, crowds in Shāfiʿī Taʿizz had rioted, crying "We are your soldiers, Sallāl",[66] while those who ejected Sallāl had worried primarily about a counter-coup not from trades-unionists, merchants or the MAN, but from ʿAbd Rabbihi al-ʿAwāḍī, a Shāfiʿī shaykh of al-Bayḍāʾ. Among the crowds in Taʿizz fear of a deal with Saudi Arabia was prevalent; but Sallāl, a Zaydī soldier with a record of oppression south of Sanaa as much as north, had little in common, one would think, with any of the rival parties – Baʿthist, Nāṣirist or MAN – nor yet with most Shāfiʿīs be they workers or peasants, or even landlords.

Perhaps strangest of all is how naturally the country divided. The rhetoric throughout the war, as through the preceding decade, was of national unity yet Aden was declared a capital as the British left and six

governorates were announced which between them formed a separate state (the People's Republic of South Yemen) on what had been British-protected territory. Little thought was given to making Taʿizz the capital as it had been in Aḥmad's time: a meeting there proved abortive, and ideology and practical connections alike soon drew apart two separate governments. The South was unified politically, for the first time including Ḥaḍramawt, and so was the North, as it had been since Imam Yaḥyā's day, but Yemen as a whole was not.

CONSOLIDATION OF TWO STATES

The South's economic situation at independence was grim. Aden port, now crippled by the closing of the Suez Canal in the Arab–Israeli war, had been the main source of income. The British base, now gone as well, had put perhaps £15,000,000 per annum into the local economy, and the Federal Government had depended on British subsidies. There is little reason to doubt the figure of 30,000 unemployed or of 80–100,000 people leaving Aden with the British withdrawal. Other people moved in: "The Adenis still speak . . . with horror of attacks on the Arab quarters of the city by 'bedouins', a term which for them is at best synonymous with 'savages'."[67] Depictions in the literature of a Maoist victory of countryside over city are misleading, however, for networks of the NLF had linked the two domains for years by now and much of the city population simply left as those from the hinterland arrived to claim the prize of revolution – which at the moment of victory turned out to be almost worthless.

As early as 1945, when accounts were still reckoned in sacks of 100,000 Indian rupees a time, the port had been the only source of wealth: "The Colony is extremely prosperous. It expects at the end of next year to have a surplus balance of Rs. 122 lakhs and a reserve fund of Rs. 69 lakhs, making a total of Rs. 191 lakhs, or nearly £1,500,000. . . . The Protectorate on the other hand produces no revenue whatsoever . . ."[68] Now all South Yemen stood where the erstwhile Protectorate once had. There were wealthy Ḥaḍramīs in Saudi Arabia, as we saw above, but the verdict of a British economist on Ḥaḍramawt in 1962 still held: "These states are not viable . . ." Even with appalling rates of infant mortality (400 per thousand births) the population had had to emigrate, and coldly the economist had minuted, "How is the future envisaged, if at all?" The same concerns had earlier been expressed for the Western Protectorate:

"it is wrong to think of [this] as an undeveloped territory, since the indications are that there is very little to develop".

Traditionally Aden's hinterland had supplied grain to Ḥaḍramawt in good years, and parts of the hinterland in bad years had imported grain from Bayḍā' and Qaʿṭabah in the North. Through the 1960s the export in return of sheep and goats to the North from Ḥaḍramawt had grown. The liaison of Aden port and Lower Yemen (Yemen's "eye" and its "green province") which had once made the country prosperous in the fourteenth century was even now not irrelevant. In a world of cheap wheat from Russia and America to cover the worst years, something might have been done. The traditional answer of emigration and remittances – being part not just of Greater Yemen but of global commerce – was not available on the scale it once had been, but it was still available, and estimates of Yemenis in the oil-producing states of Arabia ran as high as 300,000 even in 1970. South Yemen turned the other way, however. As hope of wider revolution faded, Aden's government attempted "socialism in one country".

CHAPTER FIVE

Two Yemeni states in the 1970s

Intermittently through twenty years, from about 1970 to 1990, each Yemen denounced the other in terms appropriate to the Cold War. Their disputes were in truth more intimate. "North Yemen was an internal problem for South Yemen and South Yemen was an internal problem for North Yemen, and the cause was not the connection of each republic to an international camp",[1] for while the South soon formed connections with the Eastern bloc, the North did not fit with either East or West. Each government meanwhile built a state apparatus in a period dominated by Gulf and Saudi oil wealth.

SOCIALISM IN HALF A COUNTRY

In Ḥaḍramawt, where the Quʿayṭī and Kathīrī "states" evaporated and Mahrah never had a state to speak of, there seemed little to resist change: "making the socialist revolution means transforming existing social relations", said the Mukallā NLF before the British left Aden, and an attempt to install "revolutionary relations" was made immediately. In the Aden hinterland two major figures to emerge were ʿAlī ʿAntar, who had fought around al-Ḍāliʿ, and "Sālmayn" (Sālim Rubayʿ ʿAlī) who, though often described as a fighter of Radfān, was most prominent now in his home area of Faḍlī. Qaḥṭān al-Shaʿbī, originally from the Ṣubayḥāt near Laḥj, was made President. The leading ideologist of revolution, however, was ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Ismāʿīl, himself from Ḥugariyyah in the North, and the rhetoric he promoted of scientific socialism and a vanguard party soon displaced that of bourgeois nationalism.[2]

Great emphasis was placed on the "toiling masses" of workers and peasants to be led by revolutionary intellectuals. These components save the last were scarce. The proletariat of Aden had gone home now to North Yemen and the working class in the South numbered only a few thousand;[3] a peasantry, meanwhile, might be found in Ḥaḍramawt and

in cotton-producing areas such as Laḥj and Abyan but elsewhere most farmers were tribespeople and supporters of Qaḥṭān al-Shaʿbī, himself from a family of tribal smallholders, complained that the left "passed lightly over realities and objective circumstances".

The Fourth NLF Congress, at Zinjibār just east of Aden in March 1968, was dominated by left progressives. The army arrested leaders of the left, only to face riots in Aden and in the Faḍlī cotton zone of Jaʿār, and Qaḥṭān al-Shaʿbī changed his line by proclaiming that property of deposed rulers would be redistributed to NLF guerrillas. This was not enough. Ḥaḍramawt in effect seceded; Jaʿār and Zinjibār – both cotton areas in Sālmayn's sphere of influence – erupted in "revolutionary" violence; while at the same time "counter-revolutionary" risings took place with exile support in ʿAwlaqī, Radfān and elsewhere. Qaḥṭān lacked a firm power base. He was forced to cede the office of prime minister in April 1969 (his brother-in-law Fayṣal held the post for a while) and in June was deposed as President in favour of Sālmayn.[4]

The "22 June corrective move" was part of a remarkable transformation. Tribal disputes had been suspended by decree in January 1968, and tribalism now collapsed from within as it once had further north in face of Imam Yaḥyā. The country was under attack from elsewhere. The Saudis had used Sharūrah as a base against the British in the 1950s (Chapter 3), but in November 1969 there was fighting at Wadīʿah, south of there, and an atmosphere of siege took hold throughout South Yemen. Minor shaykhs were expelled by local activists who condemned them as feudalists and agents of foreign powers; a more radical agrarian reform law was promulgated in November 1970, and in 1972, at the time of the Fifth Party Congress in Aden, the process of revolution was intense.

> Lorries packed with workers in overalls, badu with long curly black hair wearing indigo tunics, peasants with multicoloured *fūṭahs* wrapped around their waists . . . students in shirt-sleeves, soldiers in khaki, surge around the avenues and public squares, which are heavily decorated with posters and huge banners [condemning] . . . "reaction" and "imperialism" . . .[5]

At the Conference itself, we are told, discussion took place "in a comradely atmosphere within socialist parameters".

From the distance of Rouen a quarter century later, Habib Abdulrab looks back on Aden's suburb of Shaykh ʿUthmān in novel-form. The *rūfalāt* – the drinkers and wide-boys of colonial times – were cleared out and puritanism flourished:

We don't want hippies or people wearing flared pants.
We don't know if they're girls or boys.
We don't want traitors or a reactionary line.
Our people is entirely Marxist!

The "dunes" where couples had met and young men hung out to smoke or drink and discuss their dreams became an off-limits area patrolled by soldiers, while "kidnapped one night, South Yemeni prostitutes found themselves, come the dawn, as producers in a little tomato-sauce factory set up in an isolated place far from towns and men. Fishing was banned (it was theft of the State's property!). A law forbade talking to foreigners . . . Another made it illegal to go abroad."[6] The Adenis' mistrust and dislike of the countryside is caught in the figure of a "bedouin" simply drunk on the rhetoric of dialectical materialism, on the transformation of quantitative into qualitative change, the union of opposites, the resolution of thesis and antithesis, little of which made sense. "The absurd ranged the city, combed the streets and squatted everywhere . . ."

In the countryside change was uneven. Although the earliest attempts at radical reform (1967) had been in Ḥaḍramawt, visitors to Tarīm in 1972 found people still kissing the hands of *sayyids*; even Laḥj, where land tenure was grimly unequal, proved difficult to ignite, but on Jabal Jaḥḥāf at al-Ḍāliʿ "young girls with their faces decorated in fine black designs shout ultra-feminist slogans through microphones with great assurance and poets sing the glory of the President and agrarian reform".[7] Perhaps a quarter of the South's population simply fled the country. Feudalism was the enemy everywhere and rhetoric took small account of detail, for politics was in command as a Party official at al-Ḍāliʿ made clear years later: "What needed to be done was to establish new relations, to change the farmer's mentality . . . Although there were no feudal estates in the real meaning of the word, we had to use these methods in which the farmers took part with the encouragement of [State] authority."[8]

In the North no land reform took place. Sinān Abū Laḥūm, governor by self-appointment of Ḥudaydah Province, was as disturbed as were Aden's Marxists by long hair and flared trousers; but in other respects the two regimes differed. In 1968, as people returned from Aden or the army, peasant reform committees had appeared around Taʿizz, Radāʿ and Ibb, and in some places landlords were arrested.[9] Central Government set them free again. The North's achievement in the eyes of its rulers was simply to have expelled Bayt Ḥamīd al-Dīn, the Imam's family. The rhetoric of the time condemned personalised rule (*ḥukm fardī*, a slogan also applied to Sallāl's period) and contrasted republican progress, though in fact little changed at first, with the backwardness of "theocratic government". This extended to a prejudice against *sayyids*, whose place in national affairs was filled by *qāḍī* families, while in the South, by contrast, the rhetoric of class replaced that of genealogy and Fayṣal al-ʿAṭṭās, from the well-known *sayyid* family, was a prominent revolutionary in Ḥaḍramawt.

Unmarked by official rhetoric, changes in class composition affected the North directly. Important merchants had shifted operations from Aden to Ḥudaydah soon after 1962; now, as socialist policies were applied in the South, lesser merchants also settled in Ḥudaydah, the North's only major port, where they were joined by returnees from Africa and by Adenis who had lost their property. Older Sanaani wholesalers were forced out of business. A Shāfiʿī commercial class took form, centred upon Taʿizz, and a certain practical alliance with shaykhs was evident, while the North also harboured large numbers of Southern refugees from tribal areas.[10] Although Sanaa's government was headed by cautious "Liberals" such as ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Iryānī, Muḥammad ʿAlī ʿUthmān and Aḥmad Nuʿmān, around them were constituencies that wished Aden's regime destroyed.

The phenomenon had its mirror image. Few people moved south after 1967, but such prominent figures in Southern politics as ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Ismāʿīl and "Muḥsin" (Muḥammad Saʿīd ʿAbdullāh, for years head of state security) were Northerners. In Aden, lacking rural constituencies, they favoured a strong party-apparatus and demanded Yemen's integration more insistently than did colleagues from Faḍlī, Abyan or Ḥaḍramawt: "the borders and artificial separation which divide the Yemeni popular masses in two parts, the division between South Yemen and North Yemen which occurred during British occupation, should disappear . . ." The South accused the North of betraying the September Revolution (the coup of 1962), an accusation elaborated in terms not only of Saudi influence, which even those in the North who favoured the Saudis found clumsy and intrusive, but of global imperialism and the role of the United States. The North's claims were less dramatic. But already by 1969, before the 22 June corrective movement, the North's foreign minister could complain, "we are further from unity than we were a year ago".[11] In 1969, 52 per cent of the North's few exports went to the South and almost 30 per cent of its imports came from there: four years later the figures had dropped to less than 7 per cent and 6 per cent.

IRYĀNĪ, ḤAMDĪ AND SĀLMAYN

Resistance in the siege of Sanaa at the turn of 1967–8 had saved a republican government under the then prime minister, Ḥasan al-ʿAmrī. The left in the North was crushed. But al-ʿAmrī resigned in September 1971 after murdering a Sanaani photographer, and more prominence was given to the head of the Presidential Council (in effect the President), Qadi ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Iryānī, who had nominally been head of state since late 1967 and exemplified perfectly what Baraddūnī calls "the second republic". A republican but scarcely a radical, Iryānī retained the personal manners of the old regime. A brief biography by a fellow *qāḍī* describes him as "a learned and cultured man, a poet, a writer of letters, a great politician, pleasant in company, a raconteur and someone of great humility . . . He was able by his wise policy to hold the tiller of the ship amidst choppy waves and raging storms until peace was established for Yemen."[12] The absence of detail here is eloquent.

In 1970 the royalists, save the Imam's family, were integrated in the new republic; and in 1971 a Consultative Council was established with Shaykh ʿAbdullāh al-Aḥmar of Ḥāshid as its chairman (a suggested lower house, the People's Council, never met). In December 1970 the South changed its name to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, no longer simply "South" Yemen, while the North (the Yemen Arab Republic) gave a series of ministries to ʿAbdullāh al-Aṣnaj whose Aden associates in FLOSY had been crushed by the NLF; exile groups received support from Sanaa, and border incidents worsened until, in late 1972, a war was fought between the Yemens. There was widespread complaint within the North afterwards about "the influence of a foreign country". By this was meant Saudi Arabia.[13] The reconciliation of 1970 had brought a Saudi grant to Sanaa of $20 million, repeated intermittently thereafter, and many shaykhs received Saudi stipends, as did Southern exile leaders, independently of Sanaa's government.

The rains in these years were poor, which without foreign shipments of grain would have spelled famine, and the strain of South against Saudis was constant. Iryānī's most intransigent problem, however, was what passed as a state apparatus: "I see it as essential [he had said in 1969] that a complete administrative revolution be announced, aiming first to control administrative corruption and chaos and wanton misuse of the state's resources and powers." North Yemen at the time had an extraordinary 775 governmental figures with the salary and rank of minister. Subsidies paid to tribal shaykhs by Sanaa in 1971–2 were estimated

at nearly YR 40 million, about three and a half times the total *zakāt* from farming, and shaykhs and officers often helped themselves to funds. The number of bureaucrats (4,000 in the first year of the revolution) had risen to over 13,000 by 1969 and continued rising to 30,000 by mid-decade.[14] Many lived from mild corruption. Nor was access to administration easy, as Messick describes for Ibb where new and old claims to prominence were apparent in people's clothing: "The simple attire of the peasants contrasts with the many-layered traditional garments of the *qāḍī* and *sayyid* functionaries, or the Western style dress of the townsmen in the office . . . People who attempt to deal with functionaries without having an acquaintance in the office or without an intermediary expect a difficult time." In the countryside near Ibb were intermittent cases of "banditry" or of "rebellion".

From 1970 the Organisation of Yemeni Revolutionary Resisters (*al-muqāwimīn al-thawriyyīn*) claimed to lead a struggle against "feudalist and reactionary forces" and "imperialist plans". The organisation contained members of the old MAN, now the Revolutionary Democratic Party. Their sincerity is not in doubt nor their courage (many died under torture), but their claims match unreliably with facts. At Raymah in 1972, for instance, the Resisters

> captured the lands of feudalist Shaykh Aḥmad bin Aḥmad al-Muntaṣir and distributed the lands to the masses of the poor peasants [despite heavy opposition from] the mercenaries of Shaykh (feudalist) Sinān Abū Laḥūm who is well known [for] his hiredom to Saudi reaction and link with the American central intelligence . . .[15]

The lands are still there, however. And Sinān is remembered locally as fighting not dispossessed peasants but a semi-independent government under Shaykh ʿAlī al-Fasīḥ, in schism since Sallāl's time. Shaykh Manṣūr Ḥasan, among the biggest of Raymah's feudalists, seems never to have been challenged by his tenantry or the left: he was challenged by a returning army officer, who wished to be shaykh and failed, but this was scarcely a rising of the poor against oppression.[16] The pattern recurs widely.

The struggle was in large part directed against Saudi influence and pursued in terms of grand theory. For example, a bomb was exploded in al-Jūbah "at the palace of puppet of Saudi Arabia Nāgī bin Manṣūr Nimrān", the Nimrāns being shaykhs in Murād, the tribe south of Ma'rib from which Imam Yaḥyā's assassin ʿAlī Nāṣir al-Qardaʿī had come a quarter century earlier. ("Comrade Muḥammad ʿAlī

al-Qardaʿī" was "martyred" at Raymah, above; Ḥusayn Ḥusayn al-Qardaʿī was killed attacking the Sanaa house of "one of the heads of feudalism and hireling, reactionary Shaykh ʿAbdullāh al-Aḥmar". The Qardaʿīs, shaykhs or not, were active in the 1970s.) Nimrān's mud house was scarcely a palace, however. The shaykhs of the region were almost as poor as their tribesmen. In June 1972, near the Saudi border, the Resisters killed Qadi Yaḥyā al-ʿAnsī, a rather minor figure in local terms whom they refer to strangely as "the ruler of Baraṭ".[17]

Talk of feudalism meshed loosely at best with realities in rural Yemen, for people followed those they knew and the idea of class revolution failed to displace such patterns. A meeting as early as 1970 had to recognise "a lack of widespread objective conditions for armed struggle", but in 1972 Taʿizz "saw another face of sorrow . . . with the tragedy of the assassination of Shaykh Saʿīd bin Saʿīd al-Mikhlāfī at the western front corner of the Muẓaffar mosque beside the Maqṣūrah gate before the afternoon prayers during the excellent month of Ramaḍān. He was devoting himself to reading the bountiful Qur'ān . . ."[18] In May 1973, Muḥammad ʿAlī ʿUthmān, in government since 1962, was murdered in Taʿizz after dawn prayers, denounced by the Resisters as an "agent of Saudi feudalism and reaction". ʿAbdullāh al-Ḥajrī, as prime minister, secured a large Saudi loan and a reputation for severity in Lower Yemen, where executions and widespread arrests were carried out against Iryānī's wishes. Prime ministers changed frequently, supposedly under Saudi pressure,[19] and in July 1974 Iryānī was deposed as president in favour of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥamdī.

Ḥamdī had been a protégé of Ḥasan al-ʿAmrī and had occupied important posts in the expanding army.[20] His most interesting connection, however, was with co-operatives, and when a Confederation of these movements formed in 1973 Ḥamdī had been elected chief. Co-operatives (*taʿāwuniyyāt*), as Carapico notes, had no set form, for *taʿāwun ahlī* (local, almost "folk" co-operation) might centre on a village, a shaykh, family links or a few enthusiasts; a Development Association (*hay'at taṭwīr*) seemed more formal, and the latter idea gained ground with Ḥugariyyah claiming to set the trend: "After security and peace were established at the end of a destructive civil war . . . the Yemenis began to perceive a new path to escape from backwardness (*takhalluf*) and a rapid means to join the procession of nations who had preceded them on the path of civilisation (*ḥaḍārah*, culture) and of progress."[21]

This was broadly the rhetoric around Ḥamdī's accession. The Consultative Council was replaced by a Constituent Assembly and a



Plate 5.1. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥamdī.

Command Council established which included ten members, besides the President, all with army rank.[22] The "corrective movement of 13 June" won wide support, and the greatest of northern shaykhs, ʿAbdullāh al-Aḥmar, convened a meeting in Hamdān just north of Sanaa, which "joined together the tribes of Bayḍāʾ governorate and Maʾrib, of Ṣaʿdah, Dhamār and Ḥudaydah, Taʿizz and Sanaa, Ibb, Maḥwīt and Ḥajjah".[23] The meaning of "tribe" differs greatly among these regions (Chapter 1). In reality the shaykhs of all Yemen gathered, and their aim was to establish a tribal council independent of state control. Their support for Ḥamdī was clear, however, as was that of progressives of many persuasions, not least those from south of Sanaa, of officers and young administrators. "Ibrāhīm" stood for modern Yemen.

In the South, where shaykhs had been swept away, "Sālmayn" was as prominent. After June 1969 Sālmayn became President, with ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Ismāʿīl as Party Secretary. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, the Northerner, favoured a centralised party on the Russian model, while Sālmayn, who visited China and was impressed by the cultural revolution, favoured "spontaneous" mass action, and he more than anyone encouraged peasant *intifāḍahs*. In late November 1973 he visited Shibām in Ḥaḍramawt: the crowds, lined up to dance and sing, saw something being dragged behind cars in the approaching retinue, which turned out to be the naked bodies of "feudalists".[24] Sālmayn's radicalism (not to mention his brutality) at home, however, was matched by caution abroad, where he approached Yemen's unity less impatiently than did ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ.

Within a year of Ḥamdī taking power, strains in the North were showing and the Abū Laḥūms of Nihm were ousted from their posts: Dirham Abū Laḥūm, for instance, was replaced as commander at Taʿizz by Major ʿAlī ʿAbdullāh Ṣāliḥ, a future president of Yemen who until then had commanded the post at al-Mafraq on the whisky road from Mukhāʾ to Taʿizz. Mujāhid Abū Shawārib of Khārif in Ḥāshid, who near the end of the civil war had made himself governor of Ḥajjah, was relieved of his post in Sanaa. In October 1975 the Constituent Assembly itself was suspended, which left ʿAbdullāh al-Aḥmar, Ḥāshid's paramount shaykh, outside the government, and a "second Khamir conference" was held to resist Ḥamdī. Little came of it, but many areas in the north refused access to soldiers and officials.

The Command Council still included, besides the technocratic prime minister ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ʿAbd al-Ghanī, both Aḥmad al-Ghashmī and ʿAbdullāh ʿAbd al-ʿĀlim. Al-Ghashmī was a tank officer and brother of the Shaykh of Hamdān, a minor Ḥāshid tribe. Beyond this, for every tribe at odds with government was another receiving government's favour (the Bakīl tribes of ʿIyāl Surayḥ, ʿIyāl Yazīd and Arḥab, mainly royalist a decade earlier, became more prominent; Dhū Muḥammad were heavily involved with army politics). ʿAbd al-ʿĀlim, meanwhile, from an originally Ḥaḍramī family long settled in Lower Yemen, commanded the (Shāfiʿī) paratroops and had close links with Nāṣirists but in 1973 he had ordered the execution of ten Shāfiʿī officers sympathetic to the Resisters. Lower Yemen was as divided as Upper Yemen along other than class lines or lines of "modernity". The National Democratic Front (NDF), which took up broadly the cause of the Resisters, was formed there in February 1976, three months after the quite different "second Khamir conference" but as much distrustful of central government.[25]

Intrigues among those pursuing power in Sanaa concerned few North Yemenis, for outside major towns there was little administration. Even Ḥamdī's attempt to mobilise co-operatives as a political base proved unsuccessful. Some resented the imposition of shaykhs at the expense of village organisations; others, often shaykhs themselves, resented government co-opting them; most, of widely differing views, preferred autonomy to state involvement, and in the co-operative elections of 1975 – the first national elections ever held in the North – Ḥamdī supporters did badly.

The co-operatives are so important that a case is worth describing.[26] Ḥugariyyah had been the site of the earliest village associations in the 1940s, but in May 1970 "the shaykhs and notables of al-Shamātayn, al-Mawāsaṭ and al-Maqāṭirah" had answered ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Nuʿmān's summons. Ḥugariyyah, it was said, comprised 10,000 square kilometres and 300,000 people. A tax was agreed of 5 *buqshahs* (an eighth of a riyāl) for each riyāl paid the government as *zakāt*, and foreign donors were approached for help as well as ministries. Roads and schools were built, but the show-piece was a drinking-water project:

> The citizens of Ḥugariyyah living in al-Turbah and people going there, whether sons of Ḥugariyyah or elsewhere – these people before the water project was set up had never known clean, healthy water . . . now, because of this Association's efforts, they have pure, healthy water in their homes . . . The people benefiting . . . are not from China or America, or Africa or India, but are sons of beloved Yemen. . . .

A grand public meeting in May 1973 was disrupted by those who said only al-Turbah benefited or the Association was lining its own pockets.

In the following years younger activists demanded accounts for income

and expenditure (Ḥugariyyah's *zakāt*, they thought, came to YR 2 million per annum; where the money went was unclear) and some of them seem to have supported other shaykhs against Nuʿmān, whose attention had shifted by then to Sanaa. Shaykh Aḥmad al-Kabāb and ʿAbduh ʿAṭā gained control.[27] "No active work took place worth mentioning except a well in ʿAṭā's own village" but sums of 3,000 to 5,000 riyāls were being given to local shaykhs, supposedly for development, and some said Kabāb paid this to his friends "because he was their Shaykh and their representative on the Consultative Council and a minister in the State". Such assumptions about the natural role of shaykhs and the State were common. Governmental rhetoric offered a different vision.

"Ibrāhīm" was the first of Yemen's leaders to master mass politics. His military uniform was set aside before long in favour of a short-sleeved suit, and he spoke in persuasive terms of progress; he welcomed home expatriates from the Horn of Africa (then slipping into long-term warfare) and from as far afield as Vietnam, and offered Yemen's help internationally in mediating, for instance, between Ethiopia and Eritrea, thus presenting his country as one to be taken seriously. His promise of administrative reform served rather to display than to alleviate the public distress, for in practice almost nothing changed, but "Ibrāhīm" was vastly popular. There was money in people's pockets, as we shall see below, the years 1974–7 were years of excellent rain, and part of Ḥamdī's message was Yemen's unity. From early 1975 he encouraged work on joint problems, and somewhat isolated from local powers in the North, turned increasingly to talks with Aden: in early 1977 Ḥamdī and Sālmayn met near the North–South border. In August 1977 Sālmayn came to Sanaa. But the tension with the Saudis was irresolvable (socialism aside, they disliked the idea of a united Yemen) and Ḥamdī proved incapable of sharing power. The widespread, if somewhat abstract, popularity of the President seemed to others *ḥukm fardī*, "individualised (self-centred) rule" of a kind the Imams had practised.[28]

It is often said Ḥamdī wished to be Yemen's ʿAbd al-Nāṣir. He was also, to take a lesser parallel, Yemen's Bill Clinton, with an undisciplined taste for young women; his close associates, arranging clandestine girls and whisky, rose from obscurity to power through his patronage and in the end, when his enemies wished him dead, arranged his destruction easily. In October 1977 "Ibrāhīm" and his brother ʿAbdullāh were murdered in circumstances of contrived squalor.[29] He had been scheduled only two days later to visit Sālmayn in Aden and again discuss unifying Yemen.

TWO STATES IN A SEA OF MIGRANTS

Ḥamdī's rise and fall (1974–7) coincided with a boom in migrant labour. Provoked by the Arab–Israeli war of June 1973 the oil states to Yemen's north raised prices fourfold and a spree of expansion followed in which Yemenis did the manual work, sending home what in aggregate were enormous sums. Remittances to North Yemen, which had stood at some $40 million in 1969–70, rose to $800 million in 1976–7 and continued rising, to $1.3 billion in 1978–9, dwarfing the revenue of central government. Imports rose correspondingly. Apart from salt, hides and small amounts of coffee (all much as under Imam Aḥmad) there were no exports, and the formal trade deficit was therefore vast. Regardless of the government's insolvency, the riyāl held steady at 4.5 to the US dollar for about a decade.

There are no precise figures for the numbers of migrants who left the North at various times, but a census in 1975 reckoned that migrants made up 630,000 of the North's total population of 5.3 million[30] and by the end of the decade there was talk of 800,000 migrants. Probably less than 20 per cent of remittances ever passed through the banking system. The largest of Ibb's merchants, Ḥajj Ḥasan, had thus been an agent for ʿAbduh Shūlaq of Jiddah since the mid-1950s and now ran a remittance office in Ibb in addition to his retail outlet for tyres, radios and cookers; in the mid-1970s, though his was quite a small operation, he had some half million riyāls out in loans to townspeople. Such financial activity did not feel oppressive in a period of expansion, but the world seemed to some to have been turned upside down: "At night Ibb used to glow with the lights of evening *qāt* sessions at which books were read and questions of history and religion discussed. With two other men I read Jurjī Zaydān's multi-volumed history of the Arabs aloud, taking turns. Now evening *qāt* sessions are rare and I sit alone at night."[31] Few felt this sense of loss. The glowing lights of years ago had been oil or kerosene beyond most people's means. Now there was electric light. The rattle of generators became part of village life and *qāt*, which before 1962 had been a pleasure of the elite and soldiers or a seeming necessity among Aden workers, was now everyone's indulgence. The acreage of *qāt* in the North expanded hugely.

Already before the boom, some complained of inequality and consumerism. In the 1970s, however, "the *sūqs* came to know foreign black bread from West Germany, birthday cakes from Italy, fig rolls from Britain" and indeed much else. Tins of Abū Shaybah rolled-oats, named

for the "old man" on the Quaker Oats label, of "tuna" (often pilchards in fact) and processed cheese were everywhere, while the standard measure of volume in small transactions was a foreign pineapple tin. Powdered milk – Abū Nūnū or Nido – became a staple which in retrospect gave its name to a generation, and little shops which before dealt in local spices sold cigarettes, batteries and ballpoint pens.[32] Some commodities arrived in ship-sized batches: the whole country, to take a minor case, filled suddenly with identical green wheel-barrows.

The ebullience of the period was expressed in the pick-up trucks and taxis that appeared throughout the North, decorated often with nylon fur around the doors and brightly coloured fake feather-dusters upright on the front bumpers. Cassette recorders were among the first things bought. Under Yaḥyā, and to a large extent under Aḥmad too, music had been suspect and suppressed, and musicians from Kawkabān and Sanaa as well as Taʿizz moved to Aden. The "Sanaani" style of intricate melodic lute-runs, which some attribute to mediaeval Andalusia, had since spread as far afield as the Gulf.[33] Now it was everywhere, and Ayyūb Ṭārish's *Bilādī, Bilādī* became a popular anthem: "My homeland, my homeland, the land of Yemen, . . . Victory is ours, and death to the dark powers which oppressed our land!"

Skirt, shirt and turban, with a Western-style jacket, was the usual men's dress, the ensemble completed by a large dagger, usually in a "tribal" sheath. There were urban men in suits and wide ties and men in the towns with traditional learned robes, but the dominant image of the time was of farmers coming into the cities dressed often in skirts and shirts of surprising pastel colours. Women's fashion spread from town to countryside. Young Sanaani women during the civil war had set aside the coloured Indian prints their mothers wore over house clothes as outer veils in favour of *sharshafs*, rather elegant black sets of overskirt, cape and veil, beneath which one could wear all kinds of frivolity. Now the fashion spread elsewhere. In the major cities, young women dressed in *sharshaf* and *lithmah* (a tightly wound scarf pulled up over the nose in company) found work in offices;[34] clothes shops, jewellers, even shops selling foreign perfumes, appeared in the major towns. Countrywomen claimed to despise all this, stressing their own strength and toughness as much as their good looks, but few farm girls were dressed any more in simple black and in the smallest rural markets there were bolts of tinselled cloth for sale.

Wage rates rose.[35] As Yemeni men streamed abroad to work, therefore, foreigners filled their places – by the end of the decade perhaps 50,000 of them – and the effects were sometimes strange. One Labour Day – "the feast of the workers", the first day of May – in Ḥajjah, for instance, the workers of the world, preceded by a brass band, marched past the provincial governor: Chinese road workers, Egyptian schoolteachers, Sudanese hospital staff, American Peace Corps volunteers, and many others, while the Yemenis sat in the bleachers and applauded. Every hole in the ground, it seemed at this time, was named a *mashrūʿ* or "project". All things seemed possible and the future was being built at family or village level.

Political scientists speak bluntly of states as "capturing" economic surplus. The beginnings of the process were soon apparent. "With Ḥamdī the interest in national security increased . . ." but more importantly a certain vision held by technocrats found expression. A Central Planning Organisation (CPO) was established which in 1972 produced a three-year plan, and this was followed by a five-year plan (for 1976–81) that stressed, in ways faintly echoing the Imams, the necessity of self-reliance. By 1977 some 40 per cent of food for domestic consumption was imported, and ʿAbd al-Salām speaks of *laissez-faire* economics as "a killing blow to agriculture";[36] but wheat cost twice as much to produce locally as it did to import. Involvement with the wider world was depicted in graphs of wage rates, wheat prices and labour patterns. First in the imagination, then in practice, an economy took form,[37] and statistical yearbooks expressed what Peterson calls "the search for a modern state", a project as important and as little debated as establishing a Kingdom fifty years before.

Bilateral and international agencies promoted the common sense of planners. They stressed "institution building", which in effect meant "state building", and what the state was required to do that could not be done otherwise was seldom argued. Large ministries were erected; the number of clerks and officials multiplied, although with government wages low, many came from elsewhere in the Arab World. The army grew. More work passed through government hands, and in the course of the 1970s capital expenditure by government rose from almost nothing to about half North Yemen's total. Little was raised internally, almost none from direct taxation of remittance wealth, and most came from foreign aid and debt, a system of relations among banks and governments which attached only loosely to local needs.

The South ran parallel. A three-year plan, which events overtook, covered 1971–4, and then a five-year plan treated the period through 1978. Like the North, the Southern government in 1969 had joined the

IMF and sought advice from the World Bank. A strategic relationship was built with Russia also from 1969 onwards, but Russia contributed no more than a quarter of the PDRY's aid and even that in the form of projects, usually, not as budgetary support,[38] and the South's major funders in fact differed little from the North's: Kuwait from 1971, the World Bank from 1975, then Abu Dhabi. Like the North, the Southern government depended heavily on aid and loans.

In the South, state control of property (1969–73) discouraged remittances at first, and at the Aden refinery everyone sent abroad for training between 1967 and 1974 simply stayed abroad.[39] Faced now with a huge drain of manpower from a tiny workforce, Aden's government tried to ban emigration. This proved impossible. In 1975 about 125,000 Southerners were thought to be migrant workers, and by the end of the decade perhaps 200,000. Remittances by then accounted for 40 per cent of GDP and food imports for 30 per cent, very much as in the North, although the South assimilated remittance wealth to state expenditure far more efficiently, and the paradox developed of massive dependence on economies which the South's revolution was, in theory, committed to overthrow.

The dream of self-sufficiency was vigorously pursued. Less than 1 per cent of South Yemen's area was arable, and inputs of chemical fertiliser rose to twice the Northern figure while enormous efforts were made somehow to expand the acreage. Some 40 per cent of construction work in the PDRY remained in private hands, 50 per cent of transport, and 90 per cent of livestock; but the focus of progressive aims was always crop production, and land redistributed in the early 1970s – about two-thirds of total farmland – was organised in co-operatives. In some cases collective expenses were shared and production left in family hands, but ideology pushed strongly towards establishing state farms and even sympathetic witnesses speak of "the precipitate formation of such farms from lower-level co-operatives where the necessary political and social consciousness has yet to emerge among the peasantry".[40] Optimistically, the state required co-operatives to collect taxes also. Between 1975 and 1980 official wheat yields dropped from 1.8 to 0.63 tons per *feddān* (a *feddān* is about an acre), almost certainly because farmers were selling produce illegally. As population rose, agricultural production per capita decreased. "Democratic centralism" was itself centred heavily on Aden, and 70–75 per cent of the South's workforce was employed in what Vitali Naumkin calls the "non-productive sphere".

In rural areas of the South, prosperity spread less rapidly than in the North. But at the end of the decade remittances allowed Yāfiʿ to build splendid stone houses in traditional style yet decorated with large red stars above the door. Criticism from visiting officials was rejected:

> Delegation, look at these honest men.
> No-one tells you off, so eyes off these towers here.
> We built them with the blood of our livers.
> We don't sing and dance like some folk.[41]

The autonomy of households was maintained in the South by law (one could not buy another's land), in the North by the fact that remittances were in private hands, and one's impression is of household life being rather similar in both Yemens. The worlds beyond the household differed. As Carapico says, a contrast was often drawn between South and North: *qānūn* and *niẓām* (law, order, "system") in the one and *fawḍā* (corruption or "chaos") in the other.[42]

SĀLMAYN AND GHASHMĪ

When Hamdī was murdered (October 1977), Aḥmad al-Ghashmī became President but he lacked "Ibrahīm's" charisma and his announcements on hoardings around the capital, even when they were Ibrāhīm's with the name changed, had always a forlorn look; nor did he establish a firm grip on politics. A group of Nāṣirists and of paratroop officers sympathetic to ʿAbdullāh ʿAbd al-ʿĀlim, infuriated by Ḥamdī's murder and threatened by Ghashmī's Saudi sympathies, attempted to foment a tribal war north of Sanaa. Almost before the civil war ended (Chapter 4) tribes and shaykhs attached to the royalists had switched allegiance to the socialist South (Qāsim Munaṣṣir of Khawlān was a famous case), and the attachments of such figures as Mujāhid al-Quhālī of ʿIyāl Yazīd were now to trace a path with the NDF that makes sense in terms of local history and personal loyalty but none in terms that most political science recognises. Fighting broke out at Jabal Aswad on the border between Sufyān of Bakīl and al-ʿUṣaymāt of Ḥāshid.[43]

The fight at Jabal Aswad was emblematic. In the lulls of shooting, trucks crept north towards Saudi Arabia in a procession of winking fairy-lights and others moved south piled high with the goods of returning migrants until the cease-fire broke and the truck lights in the dark were replaced by tracer bullets; the cycle was repeated several times, for this was not, so to speak, total war. Finally a truce was arranged in traditional form. The two sides marched away, each singing their *zāmils* or

tribal ditties, and an intensely "political" clash was rewritten in tribal terms. Here is one of Sufyān's versions:

Mountain of Sufyān, greetings and news
Of how Ḥāshid fell back from you shattered.
Al-Ghuzzī says go tell the Colonel
It's Bakīl that advances everywhere.[44]

The "colonel" is Mujāhid Abū Shawārib. In fact, in such tribal affairs no-one advances anywhere. One adds to a fund of dramatic stories and the borders remain unchanged.

As revealing of the time are anonymous women's rhymes. In many places a quarter of the adult males were away in the Gulf or Saudi Arabia (in some cases it was far more), and in tribal areas of the north and east there grew up besides this a vast trucking business bringing petrol and consumer goods in overland. Women were left to run the household:

O Muslims, we all sleep alone,
On account of the petrol and the big trucks.[45]

Or again:

God, it's your job you Jiddah traffic police:
Tell my sweetheart hello and send him home.[46]

If women became more prominent in the fields, as in parts of the North they did, marriage became a tournament of value fuelled by new money and bridewealth in parts of Ḥāshid exceeded YR 100,000. In the South, on a smaller scale, the same occurred. The "family law" of 1974 set bridewealth in the South at YD 100 or 2,000 dirhams "but there are people", admitted ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, ". . . who still outsmart the law and secretly agree to pay a bigger dowry of 10,000 or 15,000 dirhams".[47] Actually, it was often three or four times that. Brides themselves took pride in the amounts paid.

The loneliness of migrant work in the Imam's day was assimilated to the new prosperity in novels and short stories, and in several works, most by men but a few by women, the strains of divided families and of family politics became a theme.[48] Most people, however, glad to be richer than they were, simply got by. The following rhyme was sung in front of the house after a woman's husband came home from the Saudi run after driving day and night from near Riyāḍ, switched off the ignition at last and passed out across the steering wheel:

The dawn breaks, may God bear witness.
The bed was for two and came to be just for one.[49]

Cash and the need to earn it became part of everyone's lives. A farmer in Ḥugariyyah explains how families used to judge a potential bridegroom: "he had to have a bit of land, even just a small bit, to keep the girl and her family happy. That's all changed now. People are interested in how much money the husband has, not land."

Cynthia Myntti's friends in a village of Taʿizz governorate were typical. The grandfather, who had worked as a ship's stoker out of Aden in his youth, farmed with his wife while their daughter-in-law, ʿAzīzah, ran the household. Their son, Muṣṭafā, worked in Saudi Arabia at several jobs at once (construction worker, cook, clerk), living with fellow migrants to keep down costs and remitting small amounts monthly until, at the end of four years, he returned with a lump sum and presents: "a fake fur coat for ʿAzīzah, a color television, new and fashionable ready-made clothes for the children, imitation Persian carpets, a washing machine, a butagaz-fueled stove with oven, a blender and other household appliances".[50] By the late 1970s a surprising number of places in the North had generator electricity and water from pipes or from bowsers and donkey-carts (twin-tub washers and flush-toilets began to undermine the foundations of Sanaa houses). In most places water was carried on women's heads, but even there life was felt by the women themselves to be better, for thermos-flasks, biscuits, fresh bread every day, were things that few people ever had before.

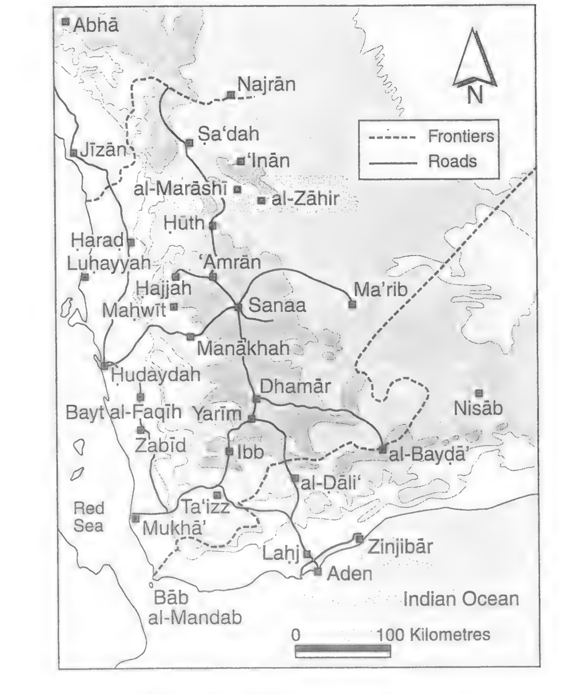
As a good son, Muṣṭafā not only took his parents on the Mecca pilgrimage, but put his savings into building a house for his wife and children. His counterparts did the same everywhere and the price of building land rose, particularly in Sanaa where on some streets it reached that of European cities. The cost of living there rose fivefold in the 1970s, the cost of housing about ninefold.[51] The population of Taʿizz by the mid-1970s had grown to 81,000, Ḥudaydah to almost 83,000, even Ḥajjah to over 40,000, but Sanaa grew from perhaps 90,000 to 200,000 in the course of a decade. During the civil war a few streets had acquired cement buildings of Egyptian form, the space near the Imam's old palace ("Liberation Square") acquired tea-shops and such fun for small boys as hired bicycles and air-rifles; but the shape of the city had remained as in Turkish times. Now what once were fields around the town became building sites, with men chipping stone and pouring concrete (Map 5.1).

Even beyond Sanaa, land-fever blocked capitalist development and merchants bought land as a safe investment instead of ploughing profits back into trade: few factories appeared and no large-scale joint

Map 5.1. The expansion of Sanaa, 1970–85

investments. The price of agricultural land as well as building land rose; the returns from agricultural land declined, for the huge inequalities of landed wealth on which the Resisters and NDF dwelt were no longer the whole of life (cash from wage-labour changed everything) and share-cropping agreements were often renegotiated or land ceased being worked. In the Tihāmah, however, production was susceptible to cash investment. Many Northern technocrats had made their start in Tihāmah projects with roots in the Egyptian period, or indeed in the Imamic era when large contiguous holdings were already a feature of the coastal lowlands. Development of both spate-fed and pump-fed schemes now marginalised traditional land-rights, leaving farmers (far poorer than in most highland regions) clinging to the land through subsidies from kin abroad and unpaid family help at home.[52]

Rain-fed land in the highlands was more labour intensive, and much



Map 5.2. North Yemen, late 1970s

was simply left fallow (grain production in the North as a whole dropped by 45 per cent); but *qāt*, although fortunes were made by a few big owners, was potentially a "democratic" crop giving many with smaller plots access to the new wealth and helping keep people in the country-side. As late as 1979, the North's population, now close to 6 million people, was reckoned to be 90 per cent rural. The energy displayed in rural areas matched that in the expanding cities, and by Carapico's reckoning, rural co-operatives built some 5,000 kilometres of feeder roads between 1973 and 1976, 6,550 kilometres in 1977–8, and over 17,000 kilometres in the period 1979–81. To walk the 80-kilometre length of Maḥwīt province still took locals four days (six or seven for "flatlanders"); but even near Maḥwīt one could now reach a road within a couple of hours, thus by truck a market, and thus the capital within a day or so instead of a week or two weeks.[53]

In the South far more of the infrastructural work was controlled

centrally, but there was less of it overall. The Chinese built a road from Aden to Ḥaḍramawt; more than 90 new wells per annum were sunk in the 1970s, and fisheries and canning were expanded along the coast. The percentage of total population in the capital was far higher than in the North, however, and of almost 1,400 new dwellings envisaged in the South's first five-year plan, 74 per cent were in Aden. Aden's population in 1977 was thought to be somewhat over 270,000, dwarfing Yemen's other cities and dominating the Southern countryside; by 1980 it was somewhere near 300,000. The suburbs of British times grew further, but unlike the case in Sanaa, rents were at first brought down and then held steady.[54] Income distribution in the South was among the most equal in the world. In the North no-one knew quite what the pattern was.

THE CULTURE OF TWO STATES

Expansion of schooling was vigorous on both sides of the border, and through the 1970s the South led the way. While the North could claim about 30 per cent of ten-year-olds in school by 1976–7, the South claimed double that, and while the South could claim a 40 per cent literacy rate towards the decade's end, the North claimed only 20 per cent overall with literate women in a tiny minority. The substance was hard to judge.[55] Official Southern pronouncements, however, spoke particularly of producing a new type of person, an aim enshrined not only in education but for instance in the 1974 family law: "Building a new culture will be the basis of creating a new awareness, a new mentality, . . . burnishing in people's awareness and sentiment new spiritual values and the project of building the new person."[56] Southern schoolchildren, at least in some places, acquired uniforms of shorts or skirts, white shirts and coloured neckerchiefs of East European style. A rather Adeni view became standard in the South that Northerners were disorderly savages sunk in "backwardness" (*takhalluf*).

Northerners, with money in their pockets and secure in their possession of a vast cultural history, often revelled in the image, quoting Sallāl's line from the civil war that he was "ruler of five million lunatics". A certain rough familiarity had been the style of Imam Aḥmad and had not disappeared in the 1960s; now the manner was reinforced by so many people having money of their own and everyone of roughly equal age, and of any rank, was referred to or addressed as "brother" or "sister". An old *qāḍī* in Ibb complained of morality's collapse since pre-Revolutionary times: "Then there was knowledge, religion and



Plate 5.2. Spreading socialist enlightenment.

upbringing, all of which no longer exists. The young have no idea about the Book, the Sunnah of the Prophet, or religion. They are going toward communism, but they don't know what that is."[57] In a riot over education in Taʿizz in 1974 a Qurʾān was supposedly ripped up, though the story may have been wild rumour. The case of Islamic morality was in fact not desperate, any more than was that of daily manners.

Although no judges were being trained, a *muftī* of the Republic had been appointed under Iryānī's government thus continuing the process of revisionist theology begun under Yaḥyā and developed through the civil war. Viewed politically, "official" Islam now preached only the pious hope that rulers behave honestly; but freed by circumstance from practical concerns with conformity and power, Yemenis in everyday life got on with simply being Muslims. Traditional forms of piety remained in place at local level and in no way were conceived of as at odds with what people thought was progress. But a third term was evident by then. From early in the 1970s one finds mentions in the North of "Wahhābī" groups.

The Muslim Brothers, from the distance of Cairo in the 1940s, had been fascinated by Yemen as a Muslim country untouched by Western influence (Chapter 3). They won few converts. Young men dispatched to

Cairo in the 1950s and 1960s to become Sunni *ʿulamāʾ* had usually returned as leftists, and when enthusiasts for the Brothers' views were themselves expelled from Cairo they found little support in their homeland of Taʿizz province.[58] In the 1970s, however, they were seized on as a counterweight to the NDF by Sanaa's government. At national level, Ḥamdī appointed ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Zindānī, a man of deeply Wahhābī tendencies, as "Guide" or *murshid*,[59] and with funds from the Saudis, "Institutes" began to appear in North Yemen, spreading a generic Sunnism whose function was to block the socialists.

Within the South, Islamic practice had been brutally attacked in the early 1970s, when for instance the tombs of saints in Ḥaḍramawt were desecrated and many preachers and scholars murdered. In the later 1970s state officials would be seen to pray on major holidays, but religion was treated by the Party as something that would one day disappear and Islam viewed in instrumental terms as at best a primitive form of socialism. As early as 1974 ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ invoked names from the distant past, which "shone in movements of rebellion throughout history. Since the Khārijite, Muʿtazilī and Qarmatian movements of rebellion and others, Yemeni names have continued to glow in the firmament of thought, philosophy, dialectics and history."[60] A minor intellectual industry turned on the Qarmatians. Traditionally to Zaydī scholars, the "Qarāmiṭah" were heretics who abused the Islamic message and practised amorality in lurid forms; to official Southern writers they were primitive socialists who held land in common.[61] Most of this passed above people's heads, however, and the Qarāmiṭah remained for most rural Yemenis a mythic people who long ago had built walls or castles that no-one could otherwise explain.

In his 1974 address ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ continued with a list of later figures: "Hamdānī, Nashwān al-Ḥimyarī, ʿUmārah the Yemeni, al-Maqbalī, Ibn al-Amīr and al-Warīth were merely leading Yemeni scholars, a few slight cases from a vast caravan of revolutionary thinkers through the history of Yemen across the last twelve centuries." In what sense ʿUmārah (d. 1174/5) was a revolutionary thinker is unclear. But the list of names is canonical. These are historical writers on whom almost everyone agreed as distinctively part of Yemen's heritage, and foremost was Hamdānī, "the tongue of Yemen" who had lived in the tenth century, a contemporary and opponent of the first Imams. The Ministry of Culture in Sanaa announced a project of publishing 100 classics. Not all saw print, but Yemen at least began near the decade's end to acquire a literature in more accessible form than manuscript. Literacy rates were

low. Enormous amounts of poetry were published, however, as well as circulating on cassette, and primary schools North and South saw issued a set of shared standard history texts which a preface signed by Ḥamdī and Sālmayn called "the first practical step on the road to unity . . ." (The presidents' names were later quietly removed but the wording remained unchanged.)

In the North in the early 1970s contemporary work, often published elsewhere, dealt with the civil war or transition to post-war politics. Zayd al-Wazīr's *Attempt to Understand the Yemeni Problem* (1971) is a famous case, providing a sophisticated structural view of the country's political and intellectual life; al-Shamāḥī's *Yemen: the people and the culture* (1972) took a different tack, giving a brief summary of Yemen's history in chronicle form as a prologue to discussing the people he knew personally and their struggle against the last Imams, while Baraddūnī's radio and magazine pieces (collected as Baraddūnī 1978) played off early Islam and the recent revolutionary past in reflections made acceptable to all through citation of the country's vast fund of poetry.

In 1977 ʿAbdullāh Juzaylān, whose close association with Egyptian state security led to his exile when Sallāl resigned, published an account of September 1962, the events around the revolution. He presented himself as a key figure, as indeed he was. A "committee of free officers" then published their own version, *Secrets and Documents of the Yemeni Revolution*, for there were arguments to be had over who was a "Septembrist", that is, rightly an inheritor of the nationalist revolution. In print there was no discussion of who in practice was a Baʿthist, for instance, or who a Nāṣirist, but often one had to know the details to grasp who was writing and reading what. To read more traditional-seeming works required a similar awareness of what was left unsaid. Muḥammad Zabārah, for instance, the best "official" historian under Imam Aḥmad, had been working at the time of his death (1961) on *The Excursion of Perusal*, a compendium of biographies of learned and influential Yemenis in Islam's fourteenth century (that is, from AD 1881). His son Aḥmad, the Republic's *muftī*, completed the work in 1979. Which author is which is usually hard to tell, though they were living in different worlds, and the final layer of ambiguity was added by an enthusiast at the newly formed Yemen Centre for Research and Studies, who, fired with republican zeal, razored out biographies of the last Imams and had colleagues scribble over doubtful passages. Those passages one could usually read by holding the pages to the light. The excised biographies circulated among those interested.

The "Revolution", both in popular and official discourse, marked a transition from darkness into light. In the North, the phrase "before the revolution" often really meant before the remittance boom and the years of the civil war were little focused on, but triumphal arches made reference on every public occasion to "the immortal revolution of 26 September". In the South, where revolution day was 14 October, streets in Sayyūn carried such names as Freedom Street and Democracy Street, and above the main road at the end of the 1970s ran signs and arches saying, "Let us struggle to defend the revolution, carry out the five-year plan, and build the vanguard party". Behind the banners in Sayyūn and Tarīm, poetry and literature seem to have continued in broadly pre-revolutionary form; so they did in Taʿizz and Sanaa. In the North, village festivals on Yawm al-Nushūr (much confused with Yawm al-Ghadīr) died away in most places as too much associated with the Imams, replaced by republican festivals which took their inspiration from the cities. In 1970 the official parade in Sanaa to celebrate 26 September included a float depicting women's work, on which sat young women "their outlines entirely shrouded in black, in front of sewing machines or with books in their laps". This was felt too adventurous, however, and in later years parades consisted mainly of marching soldiers.[62]

In the South at Shiḥr, on the Ḥaḍramī coast, a museum was opened in 1977 to commemorate seven martyrs killed in a Portuguese raid of the sixteenth century: interestingly, this was the site of what before the revolution was openly a saint's pilgrimage.[63] The second edition of Bā Maṭraf's book on the subject of the martyrs appeared in 1973; al-Shāṭirī's *Eras in Ḥaḍramī History* was published in Mukallā the year before, and in publishing terms Ḥaḍramawt bore a charmed life. Elsewhere in the South, particularly Yāfiʿ, distinctive local traditions persisted sometimes as official "folklore", but public events were everywhere grist to the mill of progress. "We have tried to enumerate [sic, *nuḥṣī*] the popular dances present in the republic so as to preserve our popular dance heritage and develop what is best in it . . . particularly dances which glorify work and defence of the homeland . . ."[64] Much of this was embarrassing to watch. In the North dance was something that simply happened: on revolution day, 26 September, men would dance with their daggers in Sanaa's "Liberation Square" for the sheer fun of it. A certain standardisation of dance and song was encouraged on both sides of the border by state-run television, which in Aden goes back to the colonial period but spread rather slowly through the countryside; Sanaa began transmitting in 1975. In both Yemens, radio was more important until the decade's end.

A survey in 1973 suggested large numbers of Northern farmers listening to Cairo as well as Sanaa, and students, intellectuals and functionaries also listening habitually to London. The Northern radio series "Pictures from Real Life" (1975), however, caught the texture of everyday Sanaa. A man takes a government job elsewhere, for instance, and his father-in-law says,

Go and may God open the way for you. But as for my daughter, I say you are not to take her one step . . .

But, Uncle, why? She's my wife, the mother of my children . . .[65]

Payment of the bridewealth turns out, as so often, to have been the opening move in endless family debates and conflicts. The failings of bureaucracy were touched on also; so was the opacity of legal procedure, where one was as likely to be ruined as ever get a fair judgement. But the detail of family life is what holds the attention. "Praise be to God you've returned safe and sound", says the husband sarcastically when his wife has only been around the corner to the Turkish bath or *ḥammām*.

You're sure? Four hours to go to the ḥammām? If you'd gone ḥammāming on the Red Sea at Ḥudaydah, you'd have been back by now . . .

Hah! If you'd seen the situation at the ḥammām! . . . If I weren't a resourceful woman I'd have been stuck there until nightfall . . .

Reading over these texts twenty-five years later is to recapture a group of good-humoured, sturdy people grappling with an odd world.

Several later series had the same effect of weaving character and family imagery – all in familiar dialect – into public issues, but "politics" was presented in less detail. In the North, television and radio adopted a style common elsewhere in the Arab World and the news began with a jaunty brass-band march (tubas were prominent) then went on to say almost nothing: "The President, Brother Colonel Aḥmad al-Ghashmī, Head of the Republican Council and Commander of the Armed Forces, today met in his office at the Republican Palace with the ambassadors of sister neighbouring Arab states and discussed with them regional developments. Agreement was expressed on a range of topics . . ."

POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

In Lower Yemen warfare between government and NDF went in cycles, which most people tried simply to avoid. There and in Upper Yemen one heard increasingly of "Nāṣirists", by which were meant primarily

people furious at Ḥamdī's murder; some had once been supporters of Sallāl, others were from areas once mainly royalist, and others still were a younger generation caught by the ideal of Arab unity. In Lower Yemen landowners and power-brokers from further north remained prominent, as if little had changed since Imam Aḥmad's time, and in Upper Yemen such tribes as Arḥab, ʿIyāl Yazīd and Sufyān proclaimed sympathy with the NDF and Aden. Beyond the major cities government in the North was sparse, and wealth came from either remittances or political subventions by other states. Saudi stipends to shaykhs in Upper Yemen were large; on occasion, funds and weapons reached their rivals from Southern sources. Outside the ring-road around the capital disputes were elaborated, contained and managed almost wholly in tribal terms or in terms familiar to the non-tribal peasantry.

Competition for power within Sanaa appeared a matter of personal connections.[66] In Aden it seemed a matter of factions, one of which was made up of Northerners such as ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ and "Muḥsin", the latter forming links with political powers in Yāfiʿ; on the other hand, ʿAlī Nāṣir Muḥammad of Dathīnah, prime minister from 1971, was said often to be allied with neighbours from ʿAwlaqī. Others felt excluded and simply victims in faction-fights: "Every Southern family lost at least one of its members, particularly if they were Adenis, but not until 13 January 1986 did we hear of a Northern family losing one of its members, including the sons of al-Ḍāliʿ who held power in the South on a tribal basis."[67] In fact what emerged in Southern politics were groupings reminiscent of *khvosts* in Stalin's Russia,[68] whose leaders were seen from the start as contending patrons.

Aden was the centre of events and wealth; the countryside produced almost nothing. To have mimicked the North's *laissez-faire* approach would have meant as stateless a world as the British found in the 1930s, and the State in the South had thus to be run either tightly or not at all.

> The citizen in South Yemen lived under police surveillance all day, from the moment he left the house until he came back, and under surveillance from several organisations: the organs of State Security, those of the Presidency of the Republic, units of the army, gangs from the political organisation attached directly to the president of the ruling party, local committees . . .[69]

Tensions that might have dissipated in rural disputes or urban disobedience became focused within the party structure. While the North was characterised by mild but endemic "chaos", the "system" of the South was rent by spasms of violence at the centre.

Despite the South's alliance with Russia, both Yemens lived in the shadow of the Saudi state. Many Southerners, albeit some on Northern passports, now worked in the Kingdom and the Saudis themselves soon ceased treating seriously the South's claims to revolution. In parallel with attempting to "manage" Northern politics during Ḥamdī's time and then funding Ghashmī generously ($570 million was given in immediate aid), the Saudis from the mid-1970s reduced support for Southern exile groups and cautiously accepted overtures from Sālmayn in Aden, a process complicated by disputes about the war between Somalia and Ethiopia and by the Saudis' habitual indecision in matters of grand policy.[70] Sālmayn, however, was concentrating power too much in his own hands for the comfort of ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, ʿAlī ʿAntar and ʿAlī Nāṣir.

In June 1978 matters came to a head. In perhaps the most convoluted even of Southern plots, the Northern president, Ghashmī, was blown up by a briefcase bomb in the hands of an emissary from Sālmayn. *Qāt* was officially frowned on in the South at the time, though not wholly banned, and the Southern president had supposedly received a shipment from his Northern counterpart, repaying him through an emissary. It proved embarrassing when the emissary was searched. On a second occasion, it would seem, Ghashmī waived the search, expecting a briefcase of cash, and was blown to pieces. Sālmayn was then executed by his colleagues who had sent the bomb. His popularity was in part his downfall:

> At every moment we see him descending unexpectedly on people in some organisation or some governorate, coming up to them in his Landrover. Sometimes he behaves like long-ago kings who pretended to be lowly people and came down among the folk. He asks people how they are and makes a point of kissing some old lady in the street or gives some poor person ten dinars . . .[71]

As with Ḥamdī in the North the year before, what to some was unstructured popularity seemed to others *ḥukm fardī*, individualised and arbitrary rule. The Saudis, said Sālmayn's enemies, had intended to dominate the South through "family rule by the tribe of Faḍlī". ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, ʿAlī ʿAntar and ʿAlī Nāṣir claimed by contrast to support democratic centralism and thus collective rule.

In the North, Ghashmī's murder left a vacuum. Qadi ʿAbd al-Karīm al-ʿArashī, appointed caretaker head of state, considered taking the presidency until his female relatives, so the story goes, presented him with his winding-sheet and told him not to be so foolish, and an army officer then stepped forward. Major ʿAlī ʿAbdullāh Ṣāliḥ, who had once been a close associate of Ḥamdī and a colleague of Ghashmī, took



Plate 5.3. Northern optimism, late 1970s.

control and in July 1978 was declared President. His most conspicuous act before this, as commander at Taʿizz, had been to drive ʿAbdullāh ʿAbd al-ʿĀlim across the border into South Yemen at the time of the Jabal Aswad fighting. His stepfather had been a soldier with the Imam, as had he for a short while, and the President spent part of the civil war as tank crew with the rank of corporal.[72] ʿAlī ʿAbdullāh was a self-made man. At the time of writing, more than twenty years later, he still rules Yemen.

In some analyses the army is contrasted with the tribes as a source of power, in others a combination of tribal and army roles explains events, but distinctions need drawing among tribes. Sanḥān, ʿAlī ʿAbdullāh's tribe which abuts the south side of Sanaa, is part of Ḥāshid, just as is Hamdān the tribe of the former president Aḥmad al-Ghashmī, which abuts Sanaa's north side. Neither had been conspicuous in tribal affairs. Rather, both had been a source of soldiers for the Imam's army, which was not a prestigious role (Imam Aḥmad used scathingly to call ʿAbd al-Nāṣir of Egypt "al-ʿUkfī", the grunt or squaddy). The growth of a republican military late in the civil war brought Hamdān and Sanḥān to prominence, and both Ghashmī and ʿAlī ʿAbdullāh rose to prominence

themselves through the army, as did Ḥamdī before them, not through connections of a broader kind.

The president's position was insecure, for Lower Yemen was at times a war-zone, in Upper Yemen tribal leaders all had their conflicting aims, and subterranean party rivalries connected both these domains with Sanaa and with each other. In October 1978 a Nāṣirist coup attempt was put down.[73] ʿAlī ʿAbdullāh relied from the start on those he knew. He had grown up with his stepfather Ṣāliḥ (full-brother of his deceased father) and placed his trust first of all in his own half-brother, ʿAlī Ṣāliḥ, whom he posted to Ḥizyaz, "the gate of Sanḥān". Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ also became prominent. The president's full-brother, Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh Ṣāliḥ, emerged as chief of Central Security, and other obvious relatives, such as ʿAlī Muḥsin al-Aḥmar, soon appeared on the lists of senior officers, as did members of families such as Bayt Ismāʿīl and Bayt al-Qāḍī related to the president's family by marriage.

In the South, where "family rule" was an affront to ideologies of modernity as much as of equality, the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) was established in October 1978 and a revised constitution granted it control of state and people: "The YSP, armed with the theory of Scientific Socialism, is the leader and guide of society and the state . . . [in] the struggle of the people and their mass organisations towards the absolute victory of the Yemeni revolution's strategy."[74] Yemen's history was "dialectically correlated with the struggle of the Arab and other peoples", and revolutionary struggle in the country's two parts was "dialectically correlated in its unity". The preamble states the aim of a united Yemen under the YSP. Part of the impetus was doubtless practical: "A united Yemen would be economically viable in a way that the South on its own is not . . . All other policies – relating to the Gulf, the Horn [of Africa] or the major world powers – are comprehensible only within the perspective of the uncompleted and ongoing Yemeni revolution."[75] Also, ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, the champion of a central party, was himself a Northerner. The NDF in Lower Yemen had meanwhile become a factor in Southern (Adeni) politics and in the North had widespread allies north of Sanaa as well as south. As early as October 1978 a large contingent of northern tribesmen appeared in Aden, supporting revolution. The North responded with renewed support for exile groups. In January 1979 war broke out between the Yemens, and the Southerners took a number of towns beyond the border.

President Carter of the United States was under attack at the time as "soft on communism", someone in Washington gained a name by

knowing where Yemen was, and suddenly Yemen was in the world press: huge aircraft shuttled in and out of Sanaa bringing tanks to see off the communist threat, such extravagant weapons as wire-guided anti-tank missiles were shipped to North Yemen (about 18 months was needed to learn to use these; one may wonder at the logic, but most in fact stayed in Saudi hands), and an American aircraft carrier was stationed off South Arabia. The North was said for a while to be in "the American camp". Some months later, however, Sanaa's government did a deal with the Eastern bloc for hundreds of tanks and forty fighter-planes, leaving analysts to write of a "politics of balance".

The dispute was brought under control, in fact, before the end of March 1979, by Arab states. Iraq and Syria were both concerned at the time to exclude Egypt from broader Arab affairs, for Egypt had recently signed a peace with Israel; the Saudis, much alarmed at the South's incursions, were willing to join a mainly Iraqi initiative to constrain the YSP; and Kuwait played, as often it did, the role of honest broker. The only dissenting voice, for a time, was Libya's. The division between "international camps" was less important, for Russia showed no wish to spoil its relations with the North and the North had never plausibly seemed a "Western ally". It had often seemed, to the fury of some Northerners, a Saudi client, and 1979 was the first time since the civil war that a broader Arab context became prominent in which the State, as opposed to individuals and clandestine parties, gained room for political manoeuvre.

The presidents of the two states (*shaṭrayn*, or "two parts", was the official formula) promised, as their predecessors had in 1972, to work towards Yemen's "unity". Few people thought the prospect imminent. But state-level politics is not the whole of life. At the end of the 1970s Sanaa television began broadcasting Muḥsin al-Jabrī's "Pictures of my Country" – still running, I believe, at the time of writing – which visited different parts of Yemen, North and South, interviewing local personalities, showing "customs and traditions" and, to the accompaniment of rippling lute music, panning across the mountains, fields and townscapes of what seemed obviously, at a great many levels now and to citizens on both sides, one country with two governments.

CHAPTER SIX

Yemen in a wider world: politics and economics through the 1980s

The oil boom reached its peak so far as Yemen was concerned before 1980 but the effects of declining oil prices in later years were uneven. The state apparatus in the North grew faster, with the aid from 1984 of locally produced oil and gas, while the South reached an impasse politically. The context was far beyond Yemeni control. Much as rainfall had determined affairs in decades earlier so now world commodity-prices affected whole areas at once, and at the end of the decade the structure of global politics fractured as dramatically as after World War II.

RIVALRY ACROSS THE CENTRAL AREA

In the North the result of the 1979 fighting was to stimulate interest in a stronger army (conscription was introduced that year), while in the South, where the army was strong already, the result was to seek an opening to the rest of the Peninsula. In part because of ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ's policies, South Yemen remained poor while Arabia as a whole seemed awash with money. The alternative strand within Southern policy was developed by ʿAlī Nāṣir Muḥammad, whose relations with ʿAlī ʿAbdullāh in the North replayed many problems of the Sālmayn and Ḥamdī era.

Despite the example of Sālmayn – deposed and shot in 1978 for concentrating power at his colleagues' expense – ʿAlī Nāṣir by late 1980 had amassed in his own hands all three key positions in the Southern state: president, prime minister, and secretary-general of the YSP. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ was retired to Moscow. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Muṭīʿ, who supported ʿAlī Nāṣir in this manoeuvre, was arrested in August 1980 and "shot while trying to escape" in March 1981. In May 1981 ʿAlī ʿAntar, who had also opposed ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, was replaced as minister of defence by Ṣāliḥ Muṣliḥ Qāsim (a supporter of the Northern NDF in a way that ʿAlī Nāṣir was not), while hundreds of party officials were displaced by ʿAlī